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The Bride of Llewllyn

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BRIDE OF LLEWELLYN

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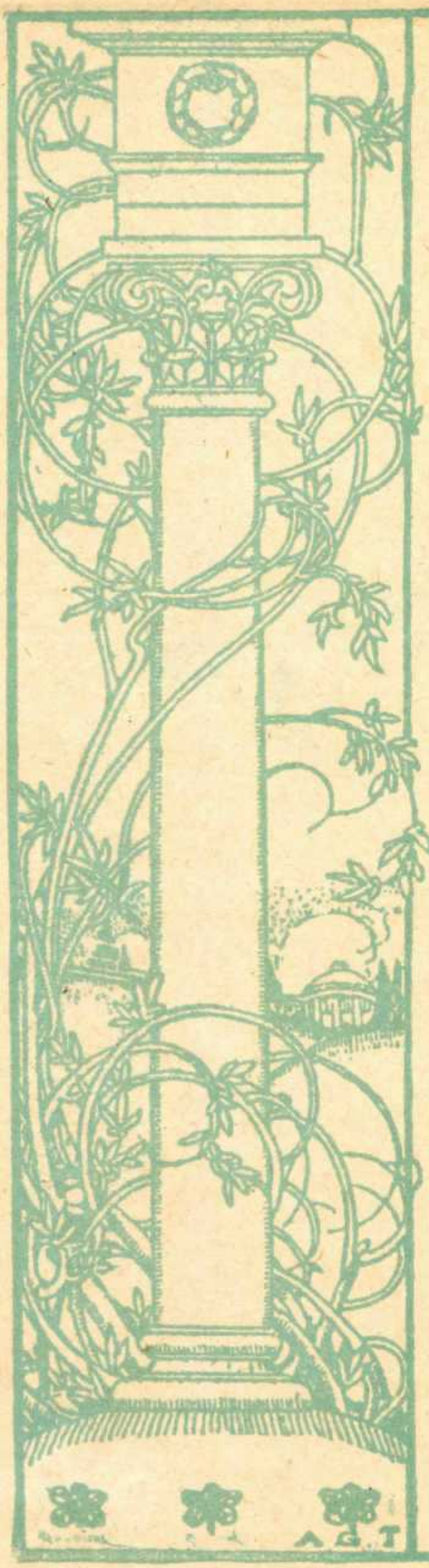
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THE

Bride of Llewellyn

A NOVEL

BY

MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

Author of "Ishmael," "Retribution," "The Bridal Eve," "A Noble Lord," "The Deserted Wife," "Eudora," "The Haunted Homestead," "The Bride's Fate," "Victor's Triumph," "The Wife's Victory," etc.

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THE BRIDE OF LLEWELLYN.

CHAPTER I.

A FEMALE FIEND.

Occasionally, once in a century or so, there appears in this world a being in the human female form of whom it may be said, that, if we did not know her to be a woman, we should believe her to be a devil.

The records of historical biography have shown us a Lucretia Borgia, a Catherine di Medici, and a Countess of Essex. And the records of criminal jurisdiction have exposed to us a Brinvilliers, and a Lafarge, and Schonleben.

If it were not for the records of history and jurisdiction, we should not believe that such monsters could exist in this world of ours.

I have purposely alluded to these in order to prepare the minds of my readers to contemplate, without incredulity, a woman as subtle, as cruel, and as remorseless as the worst of those that I have named.

And this is her story.

General Griffith Llewellyn was a Virginia gentleman of Welsh extraction, and of high rank, great wealth, and wide fame; he lived in a stately mansion, owned broad plantations, and ruled over many negroes. He had won immortal glory in the wars of his country, and had retired from the service late in life, and married an old sweetheart, and settled down upon his beautiful country seat, "Kader Idris" (which was named after a famous place in his ancestral country), and situated in one of the most mountainous counties in Virginia, there to enjoy domestic happiness in the "bosom of his family," and to repose "upon his laurels."

Only one child blessed this late union—Gladys, "sole daughter of his house." They gave her this name because she was the delight of their lives. And they loved her with an idolatry that only old parents can bestow on the child of their age. Bright, buoyant, beautiful, she seemed to bring sunshine, summer, and joyousness wherever she came.

Gladys had one occasional companion—Arthur Powis, the son of one of General Llewellyn's brother officers who was slain in battle, and who, with his dying breath, confided the orphan boy to his chosen bosom friend.

General Llewellyn proved faithful to the trust. He took Arthur to his own home; bade his wife receive the boy as a son; and bade his baby daughter love the lad as a brother. When Arthur was about fourteen years of age the general's influence procured the youth an appointment as a midshipman at the Naval Academy at Annapolis—from which he had the privilege of returning twice a year, at midsummer and at Christmas, to spend his holidays at Kader Idris.

Now, who can tell when or how love first springs up between a youth and a maiden? No one. Not even either of the young creatures themselves.

At first Arthur's pleasure in going down to Kader Idris at midsummer and at Christmas was simply that of the schoolboy returning home for the holidays. And the delights that he anticipated were only those of country freedom and rural sports—in summer, boating, fishing, riding, *et cetera;* in winter, hunting, skating, sleighing, and so forth; and, at all seasons, gormandizing, which is a natural and excusable passion in a healthy, growing boy, who has a good deal of flesh and bone to make before he can become a strong, athletic man. And especially is it so in a boy coming from the short commons of a public school to the lavish abundance of a planter's house. And so, at first, all Arthur's enjoyment of his visits to Kader Idris was "of the earth, earthy." And so gradual was the change that came over his nature, that he did not know exactly when it was that all his anticipations of pleasure in holidays spent in the country concentrated in the one prospect of meeting Gladys.

And as for Gladys?

Why, similarly, at first, all her pleasure in looking forward to the coming of her boy friend, was simply that of a solitary child expecting the arrival of a playful companion. And all the delight she anticipated in his visits was that of sharing with him her mountain home and rustic pastimes, and taking part with him in the larger liberty and rougher sports of his boyhood—in the summer's boating, fishing and riding, and in the winter's hunting, skating and sleighing. And with her, also, the change that stole over her heart came so slowly and gently that she never knew when or how it was that all her imaginations of happiness in holiday times brightened into the one heavenly vision of meeting Arthur.

It was thus that their spirits moved simultaneously and in unison; and before they knew it they were one in heart and mind.

The discovery was made in this way:

When the girl was fifteen years of age and the youth was eighteen, he was appointed fourth midshipman on the United States sloop-of-war *Neptune,* which was under orders to sail for the Pacific on a three years' cruise.

Before going to Portsmouth to join his ship he came down to Kader Idris to take leave of his friends.

Three years to these young creatures seemed like three eternities, of which, of course, the first one could never end. In their despair at the thought of separation their love revealed itself. And so, when Arthur had raved and vowed and protested like Romeo, and Gladys had wept and blushed and promised like Juliet, he jumped up and rushed away to her father in the library, and standing before him flushed, trembling, but resolute, he saluted him as he would have done his captain on the quarter-deck and said:

"If you please, sir, I love Gladys dearly."

"It would be odd if you didn't, after all these years of companionship, especially as everybody loves Gladys; but why take the trouble to come and tell me this?" said the old gentleman, without looking up from his newspaper.

"Because, if you please, sir, Gladys loves me—a little—also," said the boy, modestly.

"All right; I told her to love you; we all love you, my lad; but why come to me about it now?"

"Because, sir, if you please—we wish to—get married."

"Humph!" said the old gentleman, staring at the youth; "it is easy to see that if you do not illustrate American history by brilliant naval achievements, it will not be for the want of self-confidence—I might say self-conceit."

"I hope that I am not conceited, sir. I know that I am not worthy of the great boon I ask you to bestow on me; but I shall strive to become so," said the youth, earnestly.

"Bosh! you little midge. You are nothing but a baby. You talk of marriage! Bosh! I say. Go, spin your top! Go, fly your kite! Go, pitch marbles!" exclaimed the old gentleman, with growing impatience.

"Sir," modestly suggested the "baby," "I am in my nineteenth year, and I am an officer in the United States Navy."

"Bosh! I tell you. Nineteen and a middy! Why, sir, I was fifty and a major-general before I even thought of marriage!" growled the old man.

The youth turned pale. His look of consternation was almost ludicrous. The idea of waiting until he should be fifty years old and a commodore, and marrying at that fossil age, was simply appalling. However, he managed to control himself, and to answer, with tolerable calmness:

"Sir, I am willing to wait any reasonable length of time, with the hope of having Gladys at the end of my probation. So, if you would but sanction our engagement, we should be satisfied. Will you do this?"

"No, sir, no—assuredly not! There are objections more insurmountable than those of your extreme youth and subordinate rank."

"If you please, sir, what objections?" faltered the poor lover.

"Inequality, my lad, for one."

"I beg your pardon, sir; but will you be good enough to tell me in what this great inequality is supposed to consist? Certainly not in age, or in station, or in personal attributes."

"Nor in folly, nor in vanity, nor in heedlessness! In all these things you are about equal, I should judge by the present proceedings. But you are unequal in point of

fortune! Gladys Llewellyn is the heiress of millions—you, of nothing!" said the general, bluntly.

"I am sorry for that, sir; but it is not my fault; and I know if she had nothing, and I had millions, I would gladly give them all to her," replied the boy, naively.

"Stuff! nonsense! balderdash! Let me hear no more of this folly. I was your father's friend, Arthur; and for his sake I wish to be yours; but let me never hear any more of your pretensions to the hand of Gladys! I am willing that you should consider her as a little sister, and in no other character, toward yourself; for in no other relation can she stand to you."

Arthur went immediately from the presence of General Llewellyn to that of Gladys. Then the whole story came out; her lover's suit, and her father's "cruelty."

There was only one thing that suggested itself to Gladys, and this was to try to win over her mother to her cause. So to her she went and told the whole story, ending with the miserable plaint:

"And, oh, mother, poor fellow! to think he is going off, to be gone so long that it seems to be forever. And it is so cruel to send him away unhappy. And if he goes away so, I shall break my heart, mother; for I love him so dearly!" with a fresh burst of tears.

"I will talk to your father, my darling. He is neither unreasonable nor unkind, and he will make it all right."

"You will make it all right, darling mamma," exclaimed Gladys, embracing her mother in an excess of gratitude and joy, and then bounding off to convey the good news to Arthur.

Mrs. Llewllyn went off to find the general. The great argument she used with him to effect her purpose was the true one.

"Glady's heart is set on Arthur. If we send him away disappointed and hopeless, she will be wretched and despairing."

General Llewellyn objected, argued, coaxed; then growled, swore, and—yielded.

That night the young lovers were made inexpressibly happy by the consent of the parents to the immediate betrothal. It was arranged that the marriage should take place upon the return of Arthur from his three years'

cruise, and that the young pair should make their permanent home at Kader Idris, so that the only daughter should not be separated from her doting parents, and the young wife should not be without protection during the professional absences of her husband.

And so Arthur departed on his three years' cruise, full of sorrow at the separation from Gladys, but full of hope of the happiness that awaited him at the end of his term of probation.

But, ah! how much may happen in three years to change the destiny of men, women, and nations.

Gladys wept bitterly for a while, but was comforted by the most affectionate of mothers. And sympathy, and time, and an occasional letter from Arthur, restored her bright cheerfulness. Before the end of the quarter, Gladys had ceased to mourn the departure of her lover and had begun to anticipate his return.

But greater trials awaited the poor girl.

Near the end of the first year of Arthur's absence, her good, loving, sympathizing mother grew feeble, took to her bed, and died.

Gladys and her father were both inconsolable, and both incapable of directing their family affairs.

At this crisis a sister-in-law of General Llewellyn's, the needy widow of his younger brother, came uninvited to keep house for him.

This lady, Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, had been twice a wife, but only once a mother. Her only son, James Stukely, a lad at this time of about fourteen years of age, was the offspring of her first marriage. She brought him with her to Kader Idris, the broken-spirited master of the house making no objection to this double intrusion.

Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, a handsome, stately, fascinating and unscrupulous woman of about forty years of age, addressed herself with great art to the task of winning the confidence of the widowed husband and the affections of his motherless child. And she succeeded in both objects. General Llewellyn loved and honored her as one of the best and wisest of women. And poor, unsuspicious Gladys paid her in the pure gold of true affection and gratitude for her own base counterfeits of interest and sympathy.

Could the father or the daughter have read that woman's heart aright! Could they have divined her purposes! For from the very first hour of her entrance into that house she was "mistress of the situation," and had formed her plans accordingly. And she was resolved that, come what might, by fair means or by foul, her own half idiotic son, James Stukely, who was of no kin to the Llewellyn family, should become the master of the Llewellyn estate, including Kader Idris and all its vast dependencies; and to effect this purpose she did not hesitate to plan the destruction of the heart-broken old man and his motherless child.

This was what happened. Within a few months after her arrival at Kader Idris, and just in proportion as she won the confidence of General Llewellyn, General Llewellyn's health failed. And this was the commencement of her strange success. His appetite failed, his flesh wasted, his strength waned, his health declined, yet with no tangible disease.

Doctors came, felt his pulse, looked at his tongue, sounded his lungs, and consulted over his case; but without ascertaining the presence of any distinct malady.

At this time, "Mrs. Jay," as she was commonly called, was a host in herself. She nursed the invalid; she cheered Gladys; she entertained the visitors, flattered the doctors and made herself not only agreeable but indispensable to everybody.

In the first stage of his illness, the old man was still able to walk about the beautiful grounds around Kader Idris, though he looked pale, thin and cadaverous, and was obliged to lean upon a stick.

But as the season advanced, the weather grew cold, and his illness increased, these walks grew fewer and farther between, until at length he was confined to the house, where he was soon enabled, only with a great deal of effort, to get from his bedroom to his breakfast-parlor and back again.

At last even this became an impossibility, and he was confined to his chamber, where his only migrations were from his bed to his easy-chair.

The old man had several years before made a will, bequeathing the whole of his real and personal estate un-

reservedly and unconditionally to his beloved wife, knowing that, in the event of her surviving him, she would, in her turn, bequeath it in like manner to their only child.

Now, however, that his wife had gone before him, he thought it necessary to make another will. So he destroyed the first one and executed a second, devising his whole estate to his only daughter, Gladys, and appointing as her guardian his esteemed friend, Mrs. Jane Llewellyn.

Two days after the execution of that fatal document that gave his daughter, for the term of her minority, into the irresponsible power of a female fiend, General Llewellyn expired.

The physician pronounced the sudden death to be just what might have been expected any day for the last month. And the clergyman spoke religious consolation to the bereaved daughter and sister. Gladys listened humbly, reverently, and gratefully, and tried to take the good counsel to heart. But as she was perfectly silent, and as Mrs. Llewellyn was fluent in her responses, the clergyman went away with the impression that the maiden was rather insensible and that the lady felt the event very deeply.

A few days after this the remains of General Llewellyn were taken to Stanwell and buried with military honors, and with all the pomp, pride and circumstances of war and of death.

And the orphan returned to her desolate home.

The will of General Llewellyn was read in the large dining-room by the family solicitor, in the presence of the family physician, clergyman, friends and servants.

And then the funeral guests dispersed.

CHAPTER II.

THE TREASON.

Mrs. Llewellyn assumed the reins of domestic government; but she did not at once throw off her mask. It was not as yet necessary to do so. She was very kind to Gladys, sympathizing with all her sorrows, consulting all her tastes and indulging all her inclinations, and therefore

securing, for the time at least, her gratitude, affection and confidence.

Gladys grieved deeply for the death of her father; but the grief of youth is not lasting. Youth buries its dead in forgetfulness. Youth's eyes are not turned to the past, but to the future. And so it followed that, as the months rolled on and brought the close of the last year of Arthur's absence, Gladys ceased to weep for the loss of her father, and began to look forward to the return of her lover. It is true that she had not heard from him for many months; but she comforted herself for the want of his letters by the reflection that he must be on his voyage home, and that he must arrive sooner than any letters from him could reach her.

Some unaccountable reluctance restrained Gladys from speaking to her aunt of her betrothal, although she knew that Mrs. Llewellyn was perfectly well acquainted with that betrothal, as she was with all the family secrets, or rather the family affairs, for there never had been any secrets in that simple household.

At length, however, when the end of the year came, and no news had reached her of Arthur or his ship, her reluctance to speak was overcome by her anxiety to hear; and so one day in the early autumn, when Mrs. Llewellyn and herself were sitting together, engaged in needlework, out in the vine-shaded porch, she said:

"Don't you think it strange, Aunt Llewellyn, that I do not get any letters from Arthur?"

"No, my love, I do not. I think it quite natural."

"Oh, I know that the Pacific is a long way off, and that when he once starts to come home I can hear no more from him until he gets here; but, indeed, I think his ship ought to be in port by this time. It sailed for a three years' cruise, which was long enough in all conscience; long enough to break one's heart. But even the three years have come to an end at last, though the cruise, it seems, has not, as the ship is not in port. What can be the reason?" said Gladys, with a sigh.

"My dear, the ship is in port," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"The ship in port, Aunt Llewellyn! Arthur's ship! Why did you not tell me so before? Oh, when did she

get in?" exclaimed Gladys, starting from her chair in the excess of her joy and restlessness.

"My dear, when I say that the ship is in port, I speak from moral conviction rather than from actual knowledge. I have no doubt that she is in; though I do not know when she got in, having seen no notice of her arrival."

"Oh, then we may expect dear Arthur any day, any hour, ah, almost any minute! Oh, think, he may be even now turning into the road!" exclaimed Gladys, excitedly.

"My dear, I do not think that he will come," said Mrs. Llewellyn, gravely.

Gladys paused in her restless flutterings, and stood as if transfixed, and stared at Mrs. Llewellyn, repeating with pallid lips:

"Not come! Arthur not come! Why not?"

"My dear, I had better tell you at once," said Mrs. Llewellyn. And then she paused and reflected a few minutes, while Gladys waited eagerly to hear what she had to say.

"I must beg you to look back three years, and recall the day upon which your late lamented father first became acquainted with your misplaced affection for this young midshipman."

"'Misplaced,' Aunt Llewellyn! Oh, not misplaced!" said Gladys, lighting down upon this one word in alarm.

"In his, your father's estimation, sadly misplaced. You remember, Gladys, how violently he was opposed to the very idea of your marriage with Arthur?"

"At first; but only because he had formed very ambitious projects for the advancement of his child. He had no personal objection to Arthur, whom, on the contrary, he loved and esteemed very, very much."

"I know nothing about that, my dear; but I do know that he firmly opposed your engagement."

"Only just at first, when it took him by surprise, in the midst of his more ambitious thoughts for me; but afterward, upon reflection, he sanctioned it."

"Listen to me, my dear. Your dear father made me his confidant; he intrusted to me all his secret troubles—the greatest of all these was his grief at your misplaced attachment——"

"Oh, Aunt Llewellyn. If he ever talked so to you, he must indeed have been wandering in his mind, under the influence of fever and delirium! It is all so inconsistent with what he has said to me!" exclaimed Gladys, divided between her emotions of grief, surprise and amazement.

"My child, your dear father was never calmer, or more coherent, than when he talked to me of this matter and intrusted to me two letters that he had prepared—one for you and one for your lover. The one for you was to be retained by me until I should see the proper time for delivering it to you. The one for your lover was to be sent to him through the Navy Department."

"And you sent it, aunt?"

"I sent it, my dear. No doubt Arthur received it in due time, and that is the reason he has not presented himself here."

"Oh! but he will do so—he will do so. He is my betrothed, and we were to have been married immediately upon his return, and nothing but death will prevent him from keeping his appointment!" exclaimed Gladys.

"My dear, that very letter forbade his approaching the house, or yourself."

"Oh, how could my father have written such a letter as that after all his promises! after all that he had said to me, too! and without telling me of it! But he never did it! No, no, dear father! Your lips are dumb in death, or they would deny this charge; but your daughter will not believe it of you even though you cannot deny it!" exclaimed the girl, passionately.

"I will hand you your father's letter, Gladys; perhaps that will settle your doubts, if you really have any," said the lady, speaking with dignity.

"Oh, Aunt Llewellyn, how I wish you had given me the letter and this explanation before this!" exclaimed Gladys, bitterly.

"My dear, the time for doing so was left to my own discretion. Your father hoped, as I did, that the letter he had written to the young man would keep him away, as no doubt it has done; and that time, change, and absence, would cause you to forget him, and so obviate the necessity of my interference, in which case I was not to give you the letter at all. But seeing now that you will still re-

member him, and look forward with anxiety to his return, I think it best to give you the letter with its explanation."

And so saying, Mrs. Llewellyn left the weeping girl and went into the house, whence she soon returned, bringing the fatal letter.

"You know your father's handwriting, Gladys," said the lady, as she put the letter in the orphan's hands.

"Oh, yes, yes," sighed Gladys, as she looked at the superscription, and pressed it to her lips.

"Read it, then."

Gladys did not need this direction. She quickly broke the seal, and eagerly devoured the contents of the letter. It was addressed on the inside:

TO MY BELOVED AND ONLY CHILD GLADYS FROM HER DYING FATHER:

MY DARLING:—I write this from my chamber of death! When it reaches your eyes, the heart that dictates it, the hand that traces it, will be cold and stiff for evermore. It will come to you then as a message from the grave. As such let it be heeded. My Gladys, you never disobeyed me while living, and I feel sure that you will never disregard my dying command—a command laid on you, my dearest child, for your own happiness alone! You know how strongly I have always been opposed to your misguided fancy for young Arthur Powis; but you do not know how anxiously I have desired your union with a certain other. I adjure you, therefore, Gladys, as you value the blessing of your dead father, as you dread his curse, to break off all correspondence with young Powis, and to make up your mind to receive as your destined husband my esteemed young friend, James Stukely, the son of my beloved sister-in-law, your honored aunt, Mrs. Jay Llewellyn. And that just in the degree in which you receive and obey this, my last command, may the Lord bless and save you, in this world and the next, is the prayer of your loving and dying father,

GRIFFITH LLEWELLYN.

The letter fluttered from her relaxing fingers and fell to the floor. And she gazed out into vacancy with blank consternation depicted upon every feature of her white and motionless face.

"Well, Gladys! What do you think now?" inquired Mrs. Llewellyn.

She started out of her trance of amazement and answered wildly.

"Madam, I do not know what to think, except that I must be mad! My father never wrote that letter! Oh, no, no! My father never could have written that letter!

He never could have stabbed his child to the heart like that!"

"Gladys!"

"Ah! Forgive me! I forgot! I forgot that it was you who said he wrote it! I beg your pardon, Aunt Jay! But I am bewildered! It is all so strange! Oh, I wish Arthur were only here to consult with me! Oh, I hope I am not going mad! But I must be losing my reason, since I cannot understand this at all!" And Gladys threw her hands up to her head, reeled and sank down upon the settee. She had not fainted, however. A glass of water, brought to her by Mrs. Llewellyn, helped to restore her strength.

"Thank you, madam," she said, when she had drunk the water and returned the glass. "I will go to my room now, and try to understand this. Give me the letter, please." And she arose and took the letter from Mrs. Llewellyn's hand and retired.

That cruel letter was almost a death-warrant to Gladys. She could not believe in it; yet she dared not doubt it. She was half-crazed with her perplexity, and she prayed for the return of Arthur that she might show him her letter, and read his, and that they might together seek some solution of the mystery; for, notwithstanding Mrs. Llewellyn's explanation, a mystery it remained to her. She did not leave her room again that afternoon, and she did not sleep a moment that night.

In the morning, however, she came to breakfast, but looking pale, haggard and hollow-eyed, like one just risen from a grievous fit of illness.

Mrs. Llewellyn kissed her tenderly, but did not allude to the suject of the letter; and Gladys, for her part, shrunk from it.

After breakfast Mrs. Llewellyn retired to write a summons to her son, who was now at the Virginia University.

And Gladys, with the restlessness of one half-distracted with anxiety, put on her little black hat—she was still in deep mourning for her father—and strolled out upon the front lawn.

Nearly an hour she had spent in wandering listlessly among the shaded walks of the beautiful grounds, when,

happening to look up, she saw a dust in the road skirting the forest in the middle distance. While she still looked a horseman came in view.

Then, suddenly, with a wild cry of joy, she bounded from the spot where she stood, and ran like a deer across the lawn to the outer gate.

Simultaneously the rider dashed up, and threw himself from his horse.

And the next moment the long-severed betrothed lovers were clasped in each other's arms.

How changed they both were in all but their mutual love, and yet how instantaneously they recognized each other. Arthur, who had gone away a slender, fair-skinned stripling, a mere slip of a boy, had now returned a tall, broad-shouldered, sun-burned man. And Gladys, whom he had left a light-hearted child, was now a pensive woman.

At first their embrace was a close, fervent, silent pressure of heart to heart, and then both spoke at once.

"Oh, Gladys!"

"Oh, Arthur!"

"Oh, what a happiness to meet you again, my love!"

"Oh, thank Heaven that you are here at last, dear Arthur!"

"But you are so pale, my darling! Have you been ill, Gladys?"

"Oh, no; but I have suffered so much! I have been so anxious about you! For six months I did not get a letter!"

"Why, I wrote to you by every ship! I wrote even up to the last week before I sailed, by the *Peacock,* which sailed five days before us and got into port ten days before us. You should have had a letter about twice a month, regularly; and you should have had one within the last week."

"I have had none for the last half year."

"There must be some foul play here that shall be inquired into!" said the young man, with a frown.

"Oh, no! Who would be so guilty?"

"Whoever it was shall be punished for all they have made you suffer, my darling. And, oh! how much of suffering your poor little face reveals!" said the young

man, taking her head between his hands, and gazing tenderly upon her.

"Oh! It is not anxiety about not hearing from you that caused the worst of my suffering, dear Arthur; for, although I could not hear from you, I was sure you were on your way home, and that comforted me. But yesterday, Arthur—only yesterday—I heard for the first time of that cruel letter that was written to you."

The young man's face grew dark.

"Ah! That letter! Who forged that letter, Gladys?" he inquired, sternly.

"Oh! Then you do not believe that poor papa wrote it!" exclaimed Gladys, in pleased surprise.

"Certainly not. Do you?"

"Oh, Arthur! I do not know what to believe! I am perfectly confounded! But if papa did not write the letter, or letters—for there were two of them, one being addressed to me—who did?"

"Ah! That is the question!"

"Arthur! I don't believe papa wrote those letters, and yet I don't dare to believe that he didn't!"

"Why, Gladys, don't you dare to believe that he didn't?"

"Why, because my Aunt Llewellyn says that he wrote them, and gave them to her to deliver."

"Gladys, who is Mrs. Llewellyn?" inquired the young man.

"Oh, she is an angel, Arthur!"

"Very possibly. But what is she to you?"

"Oh, of no real kin, you know! She is only the widow of poor papa's half-brother! But for all that, she has been an angel of goodness to us all! She came without waiting to be sent for, directly after poor mamma's death, and took charge of everything, and kept house for papa until his death. And now she is so good as to stay and take care of me."

"Yes. She is a penniless widow, I believe?"

"Y—es, I believe so."

"With a portionless son?"

"Yes."

"Whom she wishes to provide for by marrying him to you!"

"Oh, Arthur, how absurd! James Stukely is nothing but a boy, and a half idiot at that!" said Gladys, laughing.

"He is now sixteen years of age, and a freshman at the University of Virginia."

"But for all that, I tell you, he is a half idiotic boy. And the idea of his ever marrying anybody is preposterous!"

"Yet his mother intends that he shall marry you and come into possession of the Kader Idris estates."

"Oh, Arthur, how ridiculous! His mother never breathed such a thing!"

"No, perhaps not; but she put it into the letter she had written to me."

"Arthur, dear, do you believe that Aunt Llewellyn had anything to do with these letters beyond receiving them and mailing yours and delivering mine?"

"I can believe any and everything, of any and everybody more easily than I can believe that your poor, dear father could be guilty of writing those letters!"

"I am so glad to hear you say so, Arthur! for, to tell you the truth, I agree with you, although I should have been afraid to express myself as you have done."

"Gladys, of course, then, you do not mean to be governed by those letters?"

"Of course not, unless I could be convinced that they are all genuine."

"That you never will be! On the contrary, you will soon be convinced that they are base forgeries! For I mean to sift this matter to the bottom! And by all that is high and holy, good and true, when I discover the forgers who have dared to desecrate the name and memory of the dead, I will prosecute them—be they men or women, high or low, with the utmost rigor of the law! Gladys, have you that letter about you?"

"The one that was written to me? Oh, yes."

"Give it to me, my dear."

"I will, when we get to the house, dear Arthur! It is better for us to go there at once."

"And be confronted with Mrs. Llewellyn!"

"Ah, no! She is spending the forenoon in her room, writing."

"Very well, then, my darling, we will go up to the house."

CHAPTER III.

FACE TO FACE.

Lemuel, the hall footman, who in boyhood had been the constant attendant of young Powis in all his rural sports, was standing at the front door. Immediately recognizing the newcomer, he impulsively ran out to greet him with a joyous yet respectful welcome.

"Well, Lem, old fellow, is that you? How does the world go with you?" inquired the young sailor, cordially shaking the hand of his humble friend.

"Upsi' down, Marse Arthur, sir; wery upsi' down, indeed, since the old marse and missis done 'parted this life. Glad to see you back again, hows'ever, sir, and hopes now afore long, as dere'll be another young marse and missis ober de ole hall, to reign ober us all and put things to rights," answered Lemuel, liberally displaying two rows of ivory in a jet-black setting, as he grinned from ear to ear.

"Thank you for your good wishes, old fellow. I hope so, too," replied the young man, good-humoredly.

Lemuel, with much formality, now led the way to the drawing-room, and, with a grand flourish, threw open the door.

"Shall I denounce your revival to de madam, sar?" inquired Lemuel, with a succession of bows.

"No; certainly not. I understand that Mrs. Llewellyn is engaged in her own apartment. Do not disturb her on any account," said the young man.

Lemuel paused with the door in his hand, as if he waited and wished to do something to show his devotion to the guest.

"You may bring some wine and sandwiches here, directly. But stay! Arthur, perhaps you would like to go to your room first? You know where to find it. It is your old room, kept ready for you all this time. Lemuel will attend you," said Gladys.

"No, no, dearest. I wish to go nowhere until I have had a talk with you. I must make use of the present opportunity, lest we should be interrupted by your aunt," replied Arthur, in a low voice.

"Then, Lemuel, you may just bring the refreshments here, as I ordered," said Gladys.

With a flourish of bows, the footman backed himself out on his errand.

"Now, then, dear Gladys, this letter," said Arthur, impatiently, as he led her to the sofa and seated himself beside her.

She drew a paper from her bosom and put it into his hand.

He opened and read it slowly, with scornful eyes, flushed cheeks, and curling lips. When he had finished it, he did not return it to her, but put it securely in his own pocket, from which he also drew the other letter and handed it to her.

She opened and ran her eyes carefully over it. It was the same in effect, and very nearly the same in phraseology, with the one that had been written to her. It ran as follows:

MY DEAR ARTHUR:—I write this letter with death upon me. When it reaches you, and while you read these lines, the hand that traces them will be moldering in the grave. Stop and let that thought sink into your heart before you read further. And now, as a messenger from the dead, as a voice from the grave, receive and revere my words! As I have ever filled a father's place and done a father's duty by your orphaned boyhood, give me now a son's attention and obedience! You are aware how strongly I opposed your wish to marry my daughter Gladys. This opposition, Arthur, grew out of no personal dislike to yourself, as you may feel assured, but out of other designs that I had formed for my daughter's welfare and happiness. For years it has been my cherished wish to live to see my darling, at some future time, the wife of my esteemed young friend, James Stukely. But the hand of death is on me. I cannot live to carry out my plans for my child's good. Dying, therefore, I solemnly adjure you, as you value the blessing of an old man who has been more than a father to our orphanage, and as you dread his curse, give up all pursuit of Gladys, and leave her to the man chosen for a husband by her parents. And as you obey or disobey in this, may the blessing or the curse of Heaven attend you through life, and unto death.

GRIFFITH HUGH LLEWELLYN.

"No; my father never wrote this letter; in his last ill-

ness he was too conscientious to have attempted to break our engagement; he was, also, too affectionate to have bequeathed us so much sorrow; and, more than all, he was far too reverential than ever to have seized on the prerogative of Divinity, and to have launched threats and curses in the shocking manner that he is made to seem to do!" said Gladys, returning the letter. But as he took it she suddenly snatched it back, saying:

"Stay! I did not think of it before! but I did notice a something singular about that signature! Let me look at it again!"

He yielded it up with a look of surprise, and she examined it closely.

"Well, dearest, what have you discovered?" he inquired.

"Look at this signature. Do you see nothing strange about it?" she asked, fixing her great, dilated eyes upon him, and then pointing to the name.

"No!" he answered.

"It is tremulous!"

"I see; but that goes for nothing, since it purports to have been written by a dying man, whose hand must be supposed to have trembled in the effort of writing."

"Yes; but, dearest Arthur, look at the letter; there is no sign of such tremulousness in that; but only in the signature! And, besides, even in the signature the tremulousness is not that of a failing hand, but of a tracing hand! Look at it! There are no hair strokes in the letters. They are all of one thickness, and full of minute irregularities, such as the lines of my drawing used to be when I would put the copy up before a window pane and trace my subject, instead of drawing it by eye."

Before Gladys had done speaking the young man had repossessed himself of the paper and was examining the signature with great carefulness by the aid of a pocket lens. Then he took the other letter from his pocket, and examined the signature of that, and then he compared them together.

"Well?" eagerly exclaimed Gladys, who had kept her expanded eyes fixed upon his all this while.

"Well, dearest, you are perfectly right. These signatures are both traced. And from precisely the same

copy. And each has been traced twice. First, by placing the paper over the copy against a windowpane and using a lead pencil, and then by laying the paper on a table or desk and going over the pencil marks with pen and ink. If you will take this lens you will be able to see the pencil marks under those minute irregularities of the pen strokes," he said, drawing a stand before her, laying out the two letters upon it, and placing the lens in her hand.

"I do see it now. Why, these signatures must both have been traced from some one autograph of my father's in the writer's possession," said Gladys, gazing as if her eyes were fascinated to the paper.

"In the forger's possession! Don't let us confound terms, Gladys. These letters are forgeries, and Mrs. Llewellyn is the forger!"

"Heaven of heavens! Arthur, how can you say that?" exclaimed the deeply-shocked girl.

"Because I firmly believe what I say. If they were not forged by Mrs. Llewellyn, by whom were they forged?"

"Oh, Arthur, not by her! not by her! She is so good, so kind, so true. Poor papa thought she was an angel."

"Did you ever learn from books, if not from life, that there are hypocrites in the world, Gladys? Have you never been taught by the Holy Scriptures, if not by experience, that there are devils in the form of angels of light?" said the young man, with eyes flashing indignation and scorn.

"Oh, Arthur, Arthur, do not tell me any more just now. Let me get over this. Give me a little time. Oh, I had almost rather die than hear of such things, and especially of Aunt Llewellyn. But I cannot believe it of her. Oh, no, Arthur; I cannot believe it. I cannot!" exclaimed Gladys, shrinking and shuddering and covering her face with her hands.

"Heaven knows that I would willingly conceal from you the existence of so much and such deep evil, my pure lily. But when this evil lies in wait for you and threatens your happiness, if not your destruction, I must reveal it to you at whatever cost of temporary pain to yourself, Gladys," he said.

She did not answer, except by dropping her covered face upon the stand, and moaning softly.

"Listen further, my dearest. Observe the cruel art with which those letters were constructed. They were intended first to deceive us, and, if that should be impossible, secondly to deceive others. And hence from the beginning to the end of those letters there is neither admission nor denial of the act of betrothal between us. If there had been a denial of it, we should have seen at a glance it was falsehood and not the work of your father, whose word was truth. While if there had been any admission of our betrothal, it might have been construed into legal consent and defeated the very purpose for which the letters were forged, namely, to prevent our marriage. The letters were, therefore, carefully worded in a manner calculated to impress us with the idea that he did not deny, but repented, having consented to our betrothal, and to persuade others, who knew nothing about it, and who might be called to judge, that he never had countenanced, or even been cognizant of such an engagement. That was very good art; but the tracing of both signatures by the same pattern was very bad art. Don't you see?"

"Oh, I see, I see! and I believe the letters to be forgeries; but I cannot, oh! I cannot believe Aunt Llewellyn to have been the forger. Consider, it is a crime! a crime punishable by imprisonment in the penitentiary! And she is a lady! Oh, horror! horror! horror!" exclaimed Gladys, pressing her hands before her face.

"Gladys! come what will, I will test this matter!" said the young man, firmly, but kindly, as he bent over her bowed head.

Both were so completely absorbed by each other, and by the subject they had in hand, that neither heard the opening of the door, nor perceived the entrance of Mrs. Llewellyn, until she stood in her deep mourning robes, tall, stately, and sternly beautiful before them.

"I had scarcely expected to see you at Kader Idris, Mr. Powis. Gladys, my love, retire to your own room. I must speak to this young man alone," said the lady.

Gladys, pale, silent, and trembling, arose to obey. But Arthur Powis also arose, clasped the hand of Gladys

closely, bowed to Mrs. Llewellyn, and, standing before her, said:

"You can have nothing to say to me, madam, which may not be heard by my betrothed bride, Miss Llewellyn."

"If Miss Llewellyn had any sense of propriety she would obey her aunt," said the lady.

"Let me go, Arthur," pleaded Gladys, trying to disengage her hand.

"No, dearest, I cannot. For your own sake, I dare not," he replied, tightening his hold upon her. Then, turning to Mrs. Llewellyn, he said:

"Cast your reproaches upon me, madam, since it is I who detain my promised wife beside me, that with me she may hear what explanation you have to give concerning these letters; for it is of these letters, I presume, that you intend to speak," said Arthur Powis, laying his other hand firmly upon the two letters that still remained upon the table. He did this partly to indicate them and partly to keep them from her possession, for she had put out her hand as if to take them up.

"Yes; it is of those letters that I wish to speak to you. But she has heard about them already. And it is a painful subject with which she need not be annoyed again. Therefore, to spare her feelings, I recommended that she should retire," said the lady, calmly.

"Ah! if consideration of her feelings, madam, was your only motive for wishing her to withdraw, I have no more to say. I will leave it to the young lady herself. Gladys, my dearest, what do you say?"

"If my aunt does not mind, I would rather stay," said the young girl.

"You hear, madam. Pray proceed."

"Very well, then, I will," said the lady, advancing her hand again to take up the letters.

"If you please, madam, no; excuse me; I cannot suffer these documents to pass out of my possession," said Arthur Powis, as he took the letters up, folded them carefully, and stowed them securely in his breast pocket.

"You are absurd," said the lady, as she threw herself into a chair near the sofa and motioned Arthur and Gladys to resume their seats. "You are very absurd.

What good can the possession of those letters do you? Unless, indeed, they could serve to remind you that your presence here is unexpected and unwelcome; yes, and even forbidden."

"I am here, madam, by arrangement, to keep an appointment, to fulfill a contract," said the young man, haughtily, never letting go the hand of Gladys, which he held firmly clasped in his own.

"Of what nature, may I ask you, sir?" inquired the lady.

"Miss Llewellyn is my promised bride; we were betrothed three years since, with the consent of both her parents; our marriage was arranged to take place immediately after my return from the voyage that is just now completed; and I am here to claim my wife."

"What proof have you to offer of the truth of these ridiculous statements?" sneered the lady.

"The word, madam, of a man whose honor has never been doubted; and if that requires support, the corroborative testimony of a young lady whose integrity is beyond question."

"Humph! the unsustained assertion of a pair of silly lovers against the positive proof of General Llewellyn's own handwriting."

"General Llewellyn's own handwriting!" repeated Arthur Powis, betraying the scorn that he could no longer conceal. "Madam, show me General Llewellyn's own handwriting, objecting to the consummation of my marriage with Miss Llewellyn, and I will take my hat and leave this house, never to return to it."

"If you will look at the letters that you have so jealously concealed in your pocket, you may see it for yourself."

"Madam, neither myself nor Miss Llewellyn can accept those forgeries as the writing of General Llewellyn!" said Arthur Powis, resolutely.

"Forgeries, sir?"

"Forgeries, madam."

"You insult me, sir."

"I have not accused you, madam."

"What do you mean, then, by saying that those letters are forgeries?"

"I mean just what I say!"

There was a pause between them for a few minutes; an armistice, during which the two belligerents glared at each other with looks of mutual hatred and defiance; but still, in resuming the subject, neither of them raised their voices above the ordinary polite, conversational tone.

"How do you dare to make this assertion, sir?"

"Because I know it to be true."

"Pray, how do you know it?"

"From certain signs in the manuscript, that shall be pointed out at the proper time and place."

She turned a shade paler for a moment; but quickly commanded herself, and said:

"Listen to me, Mr. Powis, and when you have heard what I have to say to you—then repeat your calumnies, call those letters forgeries, at your own proper peril! Sir, I saw those letters written, signed, sealed, and delivered."

"Very likely, madam; but not by General Llewellyn!" said Arthur, sarcastically.

"Those letters were written, signed, and sealed by General Llewellyn, in my presence, and delivered by his hand into my hand to be sent to their destination," said the lady, with resolute effrontery.

"Excuse me—let us be exact. You are sure that these are the very identical letters of which you speak," said Arthur Powis, drawing them from his pocket and displaying them before her.

"Yes."

And you saw them written by General Llewellyn?"

"Yes."

"And also signed by him?"

"Yes."

"Then, madam, you will be so good as to explain how it happens that these signatures were first traced with a lead pencil, and afterward retraced with a pen and ink?"

For a moment Mrs. Llewellyn's self-possession forsook her; and the lips were pale, and the voice was tremulous, with which she answered:

"It is not true; they were not traced."

"I beg your pardon, madam, but the pencil marks are

quite perceptible. Both Miss Llewellyn and myself noticed them."

By this the lady had had time to collect herself. With a derisive smile, she answered:

"Oh! Ah! I recollect now. General Llewellyn wrote both letters, and intending to write something else in addition to them before signing, laid them aside until he should feel stronger. Alas, he never did feel stronger, but fearing that death should overtake him before he could complete his task, he attempted to sign them one morning as he lay upon his bed, too ill to rise. He found that he could not succeed with a pen and ink, so he signed them both with a pencil. Afterward, when he was able to sit up, he retraced the signatures with pen and ink."

As Mrs. Llewellyn made this answer she looked full in the face of Arthur Powis, and their eyes again met. Her eyes were full of derision, triumph, and defiance, as though she had said: "Probe, search, investigate! I am equal to the explanation of any ugly circumstances that you may please to discover." His eyes were full of the fiery scorn that a noble nature feels for a base one.

"Madam, we understand each other. You know exactly what I think of the explanation you have given me. And I know how little you care what I may think of it, so long as it serves your own purpose. I have only this to say—that neither myself nor Miss Llewellyn can accept those forgeries as genuine, or hold ourselves bound by them," said Arthur Powis, firmly.

The lady put her hand to the bell and rang a peal that presently brought Lemuel into the room, with a tray of refreshments in his hands and an excuse on his lips:

"I beg your pardon for bein' so long, madam; but dere was no sandwiches made, and de key ob de cellar was lost, and——"

"Set the tray down on the table, and show Mr. Powis to the front door," said the lady, sternly.

But Lemuel was so amazed at this order that, instead of obeying it, he stood staring alternately at the old lady and the young man.

"Never mind, Lemuel. I can find the door for myself,

when I am ready to go," said Arthur Powis, laughing, and rising.

"My dear Gladys, I am here now! Therefore keep up your spirits and be firm. As soon as I reach my lodgings at Standwell, I shall write to you, asking you to name an early day for our wedding. Think of it, meantime, my dearest, so that you may be able to give me an answer at once; for I shall not trust my letter to the post, Gladys, but I shall send it to you by a special messenger, who will wait for your reply," said Arthur Powis, as he stooped over her hand and pressed it to her lips.

"Mr. Powis, I cannot allow that! You forget yourself, sir! I cannot sanction any communication between yourself and my ward!" said Mrs. Llewellyn, arrogantly.

"My dear madam, your sanction, however desirable, is not absolutely necessary. I have had that of the parents of this young lady, whom I hope, before many days, to call my wife," said Arthur.

"Sir, you never had the sanction of which you boast: or, if you think you ever had it, you must now be assured that it has been rescinded by the letters in your possession. And as for your vain hope of calling Gladys Llewellyn your wife in the course of a few weeks, nothing could be more absurd. She is a minor, and wants three years yet to be of age. By the laws of this State a minor cannot legally marry without the consent of parents or guardians. Her parents are dead. I am her sole guardian; and I never will consent to her marriage with you, or to her holding any sort of communication or correspondence with you. And now, sir, as our conference is at an end, I hope you will have the good taste to withdraw."

"Certainly, madam. Gladys, my own dear one, you will be firm and faithful?"

"I will, Arthur! Cost what it may, I will!" answered the young girl, in a resolute tone, though her face was pale with apprehension.

"Good-by, then! May the Lord save and bless you, my own dear Gladys!" he said, pressing her hand once more to his lips.

Then, with a low bow to the elderly lady, he withdrew from the room.

He had to wait outside until his horse was brought him.

Just as he was getting into the saddle, Lemuel came hurrying out of the house.

"Oh, Marse Arthur, sir; I just this minute done got away!" he exclaimed, breathlessly, running up to the horse-block.

"Good-by, Lemuel!" said the young man, holding out his hand.

"Oh, Marse Arthur, ain't you got no other word nor that to say to a faithful servant?" said Lemuel, with a grieved look.

"Yes," exclaimed Arthur Powis, impulsively. "Yes, Lemuel! I have a charge to give you! Watch over your young mistress! And if anything goes wrong, bring me news of her directly."

"That I will Marse Arthur!"

"I may trust you with this mission, Lemuel?"

"That you may, Marse Arthur! Good as any misshummerry as eber went out to de Debil's Icy Peak!"

"Very well, then. Good-by."

"Good-by, and God bless you, Marse Arthur! And hopes you will be coming back soon a triumphing!" said Lemuel, as the young man rode off.

As soon as Arthur Powis rode into Standwell and up to the "Rest," as the principal hotel was called, he saw his horse put up, partook of a light repast, and had set out immediately for the office of Mr. Fardell, the principal lawyer of the town.

He found the great man in; but had to wait a long time in the outer office before he could obtain the private interview he sought.

At length, when he was closeted with the lawyer, in the little back office, he slipped a fee of fifty dollars in his hand and opened his business.

He told Mr. Farrell the whole story of his relations with the Llewellyn family; his betrothal to Miss Llewellyn; the time fixed for their marriage; the will of General Llewellyn; the recent interference of Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, and in brief all the circumstances with which we are already acquainted.

He ended by laying the two letters before the lawyer, and calling his attention to the suspicious appearance of the signatures.

"Now, sir, remembering all that I have told you, and looking upon these signatures, what do you think of them?" inquired the young man.

"They certainly, taking all things into consideration, appear to be forgeries," replied the lawyer.

"Sir, they are forgeries! I know them to be forgeries! But I wish also to know how I shall go to work to prove them to be forgeries?"

"In the first place, whom do you suspect?"

"Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, of course."

The lawyer slowly shook his head.

"What does that mean, Mr. Fardell?" testily demanded the young man.

"Arthur, I might pocket your fee, and as many more on the back of that as you might choose to throw away on a hopeless cause. But I will not do so. You have not a particle of foundation to build a case upon. If you were to attempt to do so, your case would fall to the ground and overwhelm you with confusion," said the lawyer, frankly.

"But the very suspicious circumstances, Mr. Fardell?" asked the crestfallen youth.

"Are only suspicious circumstances to you and perhaps to me."

"But I am morally certain that these letters are forgeries, and that Mrs. Llewellyn is the forger."

"Moral certainty is not convincing testimony, or many very highly respectable ladies and gentlemen would be usefully employed in the penitentiaries, instead of lounging and idling in fashionable saloons and drawing-rooms," said the lawyer, smiling.

"Then, what shall I do in this matter? This is what I want to know."

"Do nothing at present. Above all, do not attempt to prosecute Mrs. Llewellyn; for, by so doing, you would only ruin yourself. You know that, whatever her real character may be, her general reputation is of the most unquestionable description. My advice to you is just to do nothing; but wait until the three years of the young

lady's minority have passed, and then claim her promised hand. If she is constant, she will then bestow herself and her fortune upon you. If she is not constant, you will make a happy escape."

"Good Heaven, sir! How coolly you talk. 'Wait,' and 'three years,' and 'if she is constant' or 'not constant!'" exclaimed the young man, with a shiver.

"You know I am not in love, Arthur! But, really, that is the best advice I have to give you. And it shall cost you nothing. If, at any future time, you wish to consult me on this or any other topic, I shall be at your service. At present I am keeping a client waiting, with whom I have an appointment at this hour," said the lawyer, rising, and laying the fifty-dollar bank note before young Powis.

Arthur took it up, thanked his old friend, bowed and left the office.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ELOPEMENT.

As soon as Arthur had left her, Gladys went to her own room, and shut herself up.

How much she had lived in the last two days! The letters from the dead; the breaking off of her marriage; the return of her betrothed. All these events had crowded her life with a host of thoughts, feelings and excitements that she could in no way bring into harmony.

All was chaos.

Restless through all this confusion of thought, she started up with the intention of going out for a ramble through the autumnal woods.

But when she put her hand on the knob of her door, she found that it was locked on the outside.

She was a prisoner in her own room!

Now, Gladys had a high spirit—her aunt called it a bad temper.

Finding herself subjected to the insults and inconveniences of personal confinement and restraint, she flew to the bell and rang an angry peal, that presently brought

her own maid running up in alarm to the door. Bessy tried it, found it fastened, and then knocked.

"Come in," said Gladys, sharply.

"Please, miss, I can't open the door."

"Isn't the key on the other side?"

"No, miss."

"Then go down to Mrs. Llewellyn, and give her my compliments, and say that I desire to see her here in my own room."

"Yes, miss," said the girl, retreating.

Ten minutes elapsed, and then the sound of soft footsteps was heard approaching; a key was placed in the lock and turned; the door was opened; and Mrs. Llewellyn entered, and carefully locked the door after her, and withdrew the key and put it in her pocket.

Gladys was standing in the middle of the room, with her slight figure drawn up to its proudest height, her cheeks flushed, her nostrils quivering, and her eyes blazing with indignation.

"Well, my love, you sent for me. What is your wish?" inquired the lady, calmly, sinking into an easy-chair.

"I wish to know, madam, what is the meaning of this insult that is offered to my father's daughter?" demanded Gladys, turning upon her.

"What insult, my dear?" coolly replied the lady, adjusting the ribbons that adorned her dress.

Gladys, speechless with rage, silently pointed to the locked door.

"Oh, if you mean that, I will tell you. Sit down, my dear—sit down. Do not stand there, burning, and quivering, and palpitating, like a little bombshell ready to explode. Sit down, while I answer your question."

"I think, madam, that I will never sit down in the same room with you again! And I tell you now, that if I ever had any saving doubt about the history of those letters, that doubt is removed by your conduct of to-day!"

"Gladys, how dare you! What do you mean? Stand there, if you prefer to do so. The attitude is at least more respectful. But take care that you give me no insolence; I will not bear it!" said the lady, haughtily.

"Will you explain your conduct, madam?"

"Certainly. I am your legal guardian, standing in the place of your deceased parents, holding a high trust——"

"A trust that you have betrayed, madam. I can no longer be deceived on that point," exclaimed Gladys, with flashing eyes.

"Silence, miss! Silence, this instant! Or I will teach you not only by personal restraint but by personal chastisement, that you are absolutely in my power, and bound to obey my will! I will have you to reflect upon this with what profit you may, and when you are in a meeker mood I will come to you again," said the lady, haughtily.

And with these words she withdrew from the room, and locked the door behind her, leaving Gladys transfixed with amazement and burning with rage.

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed the girl, starting and rushing up and down the floor. "Am I awake, or is this a hideous, mocking dream? What was that she dared to say? Or could I have heard aright? Did she threaten me—me with personal——! Ah! the wretch! If she had laid the weight of her hand upon me I should have——! Now I know how it is that people may be driven to——! To threaten me, me who was never degraded by a blow in all my childhood and infancy! Me whose person was always sacred from such violence, even by my own mother and father and nurse! Heavens! If she had struck me, I should have——! Yes, I should have killed her!"

Suddenly, as she said this in the transports of her rage, Gladys threw back her head. And as she did so, her eyes fell upon a picture hanging above the mantelpiece.

As she looked upon this picture she became perfectly still; her face that was convulsed with rage grew calm; the fire died out of her blazing cheeks; tears filled her eyes.

"Heaven forgive me," she softly breathed; "Heaven forgive me. What am I, poor child of dust, that I should grow furious at the bare threat of an outrage that Thou, the Son of God, didst bear without a murmur? Oh, Saviour, by Thy infinite love, give me a portion of Thy infinite meekness," said Gladys, sinking on her knees and melting into tears.

What was the picture that had moved Gladys so deeply? That had arrested her, in the very tempest and whirlpool of her passion, and had softened and subdued her, and brought her to her knees?

It was a simple engraving from the "Ecce Homo" of Corregio. It represented our Saviour bleeding from the recent scourging, crowned with thorns, and wrapped in the mocking purple robe, at the moment Pilate presented him to the Jews, saying: "Behold the man." The artist had caught the spirit of the text, and the divine patience in that pictured face subdued the angry passions of the beholder.

When Gladys arose from her kneeling posture, she sat down by the open window, and leaning her elbow on the sill, looked out upon the peaceful scenes of nature. Under her eyes lay the ornamental grounds immediately around Kader Idris; and all glorious with rich autumnal flowers blooming and glowing in the afternoon sunshine. Beyond them wound the Serpentine River, and beyond that arose the Alleghany Mountains; and in the far distance towered the Peaks of Otto.

Soothed and strengthened by the peaceful beauty and majestic sublimity of the scene, Gladys sat ruminating far into the evening. She sat until the sun went down, firing the heavens and the earth with his retiring rays, until the western horizon, with all its broken and prismatic clouds, blazed as with a general conflagration; and every mountain top and every forest tree, and every stream and river glowed ruddy red beneath the glare. She sat until all this gorgeousness of coloring faded out and the moon arose, silver gilding all the scene, until all that had lately flamed like rubies in the sun, now mildly beamed like pearls beneath the moon.

And still Gladys sat there, while her room grew dark. She did not ring for lights. She dreaded another interview with her aunt; she dreaded another outbreak of her own temper; and so she resolved to remain quiet as long as circumstances would permit her to continue so.

In truth, Gladys had a good deal to contend with—not only of external wrongs, but of evils in her own nature. She had come of a proud, passionate, overbearing race, who in their old ancestral country had been lords of the

soil and masters of many vassals; and in the country of their adoption had been planters and slaveholders for many generations. All their circumstances had fostered a high, arrogant, despotic spirit. Gladys was of their blood, and at the slightest provocation this blood was apt to take fire. She had received a religious education; but had been trained with the utmost tenderness and gentleness. She had never been subjected to harsh contradiction or to any thing approaching corporeal punishment, which latter she would have regarded as the deepest degradation.

It is said that we know not of what spirit we are. Certainly Gladys never knew until this day what spirit she was of. Never in her life before having been subjected to insult, she never knew the murderous wrath that lay latent in her own soul. And now that it had broken out and shown itself to her in all its hideous destructiveness, she was appalled.

"Oh, Heaven! I am no better, not a whit better than those who suffer death by law for their crimes!" she said to herself, with a shudder.

While she sat thus, she heard the key turned in the lock, and looking up, saw Mrs. Llewellyn enter the room, followed by Bessy, bearing a tray with tea and cakes.

Now, apparently, Mrs. Llewellyn herself had regretted her harshness to Gladys, not because of its unkindness, but because of its bad policy. For certainly it was her cue to retain the affection of this girl whom she wished to bend to her will. And to do this she must govern her as gently as possible. These considerations were not, however, strong enough to induce her to make any apology to Gladys; but only to modify her manner to the poor girl.

"Draw that stand up to the side of Miss Llewellyn's chair, and set the tea tray on it. And then leave the room," said the lady to the servant.

And when this order was obeyed and Bessy had left the room, Mrs. Llewellyn carefully locked the door behind her, and then seating herself beside her ward said, in a grave and not unkind tone:

"Gladys, while you take your tea, I will tell you the

reasons that have induced—I may say compelled—me, unwillingly, to subject you to this temporary restraint."

"I should be glad to know them, madam," said the young girl.

"And I hope that you will listen to them without giving way to the unbecoming anger that betrayed you into much injustice, not to say gross impropriety of word and manner, toward myself."

Gladys glanced up at the pictured face over the mantelpiece, and answered:

"For all the wrong that I may have been led into, Aunt Llewellyn, I beg your pardon, and that of the Lord. I always knew that anger was sinful, but when I think of our Saviour's example of patience, I feel that it is inexcusable."

"I am glad to hear you say so. Now drink your tea, while I tell you why I deem it right to keep you under some temporary restraint."

At these last words the girl's cheeks flushed and her eyes flashed again, but she controlled herself and remained silent, while Mrs. Llewellyn proceeded:

"Gladys, I began by saying to you that I stand in the relation of a parent toward you during your minority. I consider that relation a holy trust, which I have not betrayed, although you have charged me with having done so."

"I beg your pardon if I have wronged you, Aunt Llewellyn."

"That is understood! Holding the relation I do toward you, and feeling a deep responsibility for the trust, I must consider your welfare and happiness the paramount objects of my life. To secure those objects I must separate you from that dangerous young man whose influence over you I have every reason to dread. The only way in which I can do this is to seclude you in your own room during the stay of this young man in the neighborhood. In doing this, I am sure I do but carry out the views and intentions of your father. I shall make this transient seclusion as happy as the circumstances will permit. You shall have your music, books, birds, flowers—in short, all that you require for instruction or amusement, removed into this room. And as soon as I feel assured that Arthur

Powis has rejoined his ship, your restraint shall be at an end. Now, Gladys, I hope that you understand me?"

"I think I do, Aunt Llewellyn."

"And I trust that you will submit cheerfully to this arrangement."

"I trust in the Lord that I shall be led to do right," said Gladys, pressing her fingers together in the earnestness of her feelings.

After a little more conversation the lady rang the bell, and ordered the servant who answered it to take away the tea service.

Then she bade Gladys good-night, locked her in, and went downstairs.

"What is right?" inquired the perplexed girl of herself, when she was left alone. "What is right? Ought I really go so far as to give up Arthur? Oh, no, no, no, no. I could not do that if I would, and would not if I could. He was my mother's and father's choice, as well as my own. I am sure of it. No; I will not give him up. I will try and control my temper; I will treat Aunt Llewellyn respectfully, and will not give her revilings for revilings. But—I will be faithful to my love!"

Half that night Gladys sat at that window, gazing dreamily out into the starlit night. When, at length, she went to bed, worn out with excitement, she slept well until morning.

The next day, according to her promise, Mrs. Llewellyn sent into Gladys' room everything that could be supposed to render the girl's captivity endurable.

But Gladys could not fix her attention upon any one thing. Needlework, music, drawing and reading were tried successively, and tried in vain. She spent her time in walking restlessly about the floor or gazing from the window, and in longing to communicate in some way with Arthur, and in wondering when that desire would be gratified.

On the second day she grew more weary and anxious than ever; and she walked about less and sat looking from the window longer. As she sat there late in the afternoon, she saw Lemuel with the wooden rake raking up the dried leaves that were lying in heaps upon the lawn.

She tapped upon the windowpane until she had attracted his attention, and then threw up the sash and spoke to him:

"Hist, Lemuel! look up here!"

After the manner of his kind, Lemuel looked all around the horizon, and then up into the tops of the trees, and everywhere else but at the right place.

"Here, Lemuel! up here!" cried Gladys, in a tone eager from anxiety, and half-suppressed from the fear of being heard by others than the one to whom she spoke.

Lemuel looked up to the top of the chimneys, and, seeing no one there, brought his eyes down to the level of the second-floor windows, where they encountered the anxious gaze of Miss Llewellyn.

"Laws, Miss Gladys!"

"Hush, Lem, or speak very low! Is there any one within sight or hearing?"

"Laws, no, Miss Gladys—not a single soul in dese here parts of de grounds!"

"How came you here?"

"Why, you see, Miss Gladys, de madam done took me off de hall door and put dat misable deaf-and-dumb devil—begging your pardon, miss; begging your pardon humble for using bad words, but he is a devil—Jude, dere in my place, which is perfectly widiculous, 'cause he can't hear, nor likewise speak a word, but only make signs, or take in a card, or shake his head and refuse to take it in. So what de use of putting he dere."

"I suppose Mrs. Llewellyn had some reason for doing it. And so your duties are changed?"

"Yes, miss; and I is 'lieved of my command in de hall, and 'signed to de department ob de ornamental gardening."

"Do you like gardening as well as waiting?"

"Well, miss, to me personable it don't make much dif'ence. Wot I 'siders is de wisitors."

"Yes! Come here, Lem. Come closer. I have something particular to say to you."

The boy came, dragging his rake behind him, and stood immediately under the window from which Gladys leaned.

"Lem," whispered Gladys, "have you seen Mr. Powis since the day before yesterday?"

"No, miss."

"Have you heard of any letter that has been left for me?"

"Yes, miss; de berry same morning—which it was yes'day morning as I 'lieved from duty in de hall—and just afore I was so 'lieved comes up a messenger on hoss-back from Standwell, as he said, and 'quires for you, saying as he has a letter which he must put into your hands special. And I was just a gwine to look for you when de madam came out and axed the messenger what he wanted. And the messenger told her that he wanted to put a letter into Miss Llewellyn's own hands. De madam told him how she wouldn't 'mit of him giving no letter, and so she ordered him offen de premises."

"I thought as much. I really did. Lemuel, that letter was from Mr. Powis."

"So I s'picioned, miss."

"And you know he had a perfect right to send me a letter."

"In course I does. Didn't ole marse tell all we collored folks how you and Marse Arthur was engaged to be married, and how us was to 'sider him and look up to him as our futur' marster?"

"Yes, I know; and I wish your testimony to that effect could be taken in the courts, Lemuel; for it would save us from a great deal of distress. But it cannot, and so there is an end of that. But, at any rate, you know, Lemuel, that Mr. Powis has a perfect right to send me a letter, and no one has a right to intercept it?"

"In course I does, Miss Gladys."

"But the letter he wrote me, which was a very important one, for which I have been anxiously waiting for the last two days, has been stopped and sent back. And I have no writing materials at hand, or I would write to Mr. Powis, and send the note by you. But you can take a message for me, Lemuel?"

"Sartain I can, Miss Gladys. 'Cause why? Why, 'cause I feels bounden to 'bey you 'fore anybody else on dis 'state; for, no matter who has de power, you has de right to give orders here."

"Unfortunately, I have no right to give orders, and shall have none for three years to come; but never mind about that now, Lemuel. And neither do I wish you to neglect any task Mrs. Llewellyn has given you, to do anything for me. But after your day's work is done, Lemuel, you have some time to yourself, and I ask you only as a favor to take a message for me then."

"Why, Miss Gladys, de werry greatest favor and honor and kindness as you could do me would be to set me to work for you in any way in dis world. And soon's ebber de sun sets I shall be done my day's task and at your sarvice, miss."

"Very well, Lemuel; come to me, then," said Gladys, drawing in her head and letting down the sash.

Lemuel resumed his work.

Gladys seated herself at the window to wait until the sunset hour released the boy from his day's work.

Blood red and shorn of all his rays, in the dull autumnal mist the sun went down that fatal night. No sooner had that great red globe of fire dropped out of sight below the horizon than Lemuel threw down his rake and presented himself under the window.

Gladys again threw up the sash and looked out.

"Lemuel, are you quite alone out there?" she asked.

"Quite, Miss Gladys. No one anywheres nigh."

"Listen, then. This is the message you must take to Mr. Powis. But stop—do you know where to find him?"

"Oh, yes miss, at the Rest Hotel in Standwell."

"Right. Well, then, tell Mr. Powis that I did not get his letter, and tell him why I did not get it—though I suppose he knows all that already from the report of his messenger."

"Yes, miss."

"Tell him also that I am compelled to send you to him because I have no other means of communicating with him."

"Oh, Miss Gladys, that's all right! Marse Arthur, when he left here t'other day, give me commission, sc he did, to watch over you, miss, and bring him news of you whenever I could."

"Mr. Powis did that, Lemuel?"

"'Deed, miss, he did; but I haint had no news to go to him with by reason of not seeing you until this evening."

"My poor Arthur!" murmured Gladys to herself. Then speaking aloud—"Tell him, Lemuel, that I would write to him, only that I am a prisoner in my own room and deprived of writing materials."

"A prisoner in your own room!" exclaimed Lemuel, opening his mouth and eyes in consternation.

"Yes, and, Lemuel, do not attempt any rebellion against Mrs. Llewellyn's authority. But go quietly, and without saying a word to any other person, to Mr. Powis, and tell him all that I have told you. And wait to see what he himself proposes. No doubt he will do all that is right. Now go, like a good lad, while you have an opportunity."

"I'll go; yes, I'll go. But if Marse Arthur don't find a way of getting you outen dis here place afore to-morrow night, I hopes and trusts as you won't try to 'vent me of doing it; 'cause if you did, my heart would bust, Miss Gladys," said Lemuel, wiping his eyes with the sleeves of his jacket.

* * * * * * * *

When Arthur received the message he rushed off at once to attempt a rescue. Fortunately, Lemuel had placed a ladder against the window of the room in which Gladys was a prisoner. Up this ladder Arthur went, and came back a moment later carrying his betrothed.

Without thinking greatly of the risk, the two young people left the house, crossed the Potomac River, and were married in the neighboring State of Maryland. After the ceremony at Harper's Ferry, where the Rev. Mr. Jones officiated, and Mrs. Parker, the landlady of the little inn, when the runaway lovers had rested, supplied the congratulations, Arthur Powis and his wife took stage for Washington city. Here they secured rooms at Ceres Cottage with three elderly sisters, who bore the name of Crane, and settled down to enjoy their new life in this temporary home.

CHAPTER V.

THE SWOOP OF THE VULTURE.

The next morning, immediately after breakfast, Arthur took a gay and loving leave of Gladys, and started to go on board of his ship to report for duty.

Gladys, standing at the rustic gate where she had parted with him, watched him quite out of sight, and then went back to the house, ran up into her own room, threw herself upon a chair and burst into tears.

This was very weak and foolish, as she frankly said to herself, because he was only gone for the day, and he would be back again at night. But then this was the first time he had left her since their marriage, and she felt so lonely in the strange house, that she could not help weeping a little.

When she had wept herself into a state of composure, and while she was quietly wiping her eyes, there came a rap at her door.

"Come in," she said, expecting to see Harriet, who fulfilled the duties of chambermaid as well as cook.

"If you please, ma'am," said the woman, courtesying at the open door, "the young ladies, ma'am, sends their 'spects to you, and says how they hopes you won't 'main up here a-mopin' by yourself, but will come down to their sittin'-room and look at their fancy quilt, as they've just stretched out in the frame; and they'll be very glad to see you."

"The young ladies! What young ladies, Harriet?" inquired Gladys, with surprise and interest; for youth loves the companionship of youth; and visions of social enjoyment arose before the young bride's imagination. "What young ladies, Harriet?"

"Why, o' course, my young ladies, honey."

"Yours?"

"Yes, honey, my young misseses."

"I thought you belonged to the Misses Crane?"

"Why, so I does, honey. It's them as I 'ludes to."

"But—you spoke of young ladies; are they relations of the landladies?" inquired the mystified Gladys.

"Lors bress my soul and body, honey! Ain't it dem as I'm a talking 'bout all de time? De lan'dies, my young misses, de Miss Craneses—Miss Polly, and Miss Milly, and Miss Jenny Crane?"

Gladys stared for a moment in the deepest perplexity.

"Lors, chile, de colonel goin' away must a 'fused your head! It's my three young misseses as you lives 'long of as has sent me to fetch you," said Harriet, just a little impatiently.

Then Gladys, as the truth broke on her, and she understood the whole matter, burst into a gay laugh.

This honest, stolid, middle-aged negro woman, who called the venerable ladies her "young misseses," had doubtless been taught to do so when she was an infant just learning to talk, and they were spinsters of about twenty-five.

The sisters were very talkative; but in their garrulity they were more communicative than inquisitive; fonder of narrating their own family affairs than of inquiring into those of others. Gladys was pleased with these traits of character, as they saved her the trouble of parrying awkward questions. In the conversation that followed, she learned much of the sisters' history.

In the first place they were Catholics, as their forefathers had been, and as Gladys had already guessed from the pictures on the walls. Now, though this young lady had been brought up in the Protestant faith, she had also been educated in the spirit of religious toleration, so she did not like her kind hostesses the less for a difference of opinion.

She learned, besides, that they owned the house and the market garden in which they lived; that they had one other sister, the youngest of the family, Amy, who had married, against their parents' will, a Northern man of the name of Hart, and had gone off with him away to the North; and of her, long ago disinherited and exiled, if not dead, they had not heard for many, many years; and that they had a brother, a priest, who had charge of the parish of St. Peters, near the Capitol Hill, and who came once or twice a week to take tea with them.

These and many other minor matters were gratuitously told to Gladys, who listened with friendly interest.

Upon the whole, her day passed very cheerfully.

Late in the afternoon she put on her bonnet and walked in the direction of the navy yard to meet Arthur. And she met him within half a mile of the house, and they strolled back through the fields together.

"I have my furlough renewed for a week, dear Gladys! When I told my captain how lately I had been married he laughed and voluntarily gave me another week's leave of absence. So, as to-morrow is Sunday, I will take you to church; and on Monday we will go and see some of the public buildings," said Arthur, as he drew her arm within his own and walked her on toward their temporary home.

Their programme was carried out to the letter. The next morning they walked down to the Episcopal church, and heard a satisfactory sermon from the pastor, Dr. Starr. On Monday they visited the Patent Office, the Post Office and the Capitol. On Tuesday they went over the State, War, Navy and Treasury Departments. On Wednesday they went over the President's house and grounds. On Thursday they visited the Georgetown college and convent. On Friday they went through the arsenal. On Saturday morning Arthur said to her:

"Now, dearest, I think we have made very good use of our time, and have seen as much as it was possible to see in six days. This is the seventh and last day of my furlough. I have reserved for this day the greatest treat of all—the treat of showing you over my ship! So, get on your bonnet and we will start."

Gladys lost no time, you may be sure. She was soon ready.

And they set out gayly to walk on that pleasant autumnal morning.

"They reached the Navy Yard in good time, and went down to the water's edge. The fine frigate *Neptune* lay about a quarter of a mile from the shore.

Arthur hailed the ship, which immediately sent a boat to bring the young couple off. Arthur lifted Gladys in, and they were swiftly rowed to the side of the frigate.

The captain, who was expecting this visit, met them on the deck.

Arthur presented Gladys, who was received with much gallantry and distinction, and introduced to the officers, and to their wives, who had come on board to meet the young bride.

They all went over the ship together. Gladys was interested in everything that was shown her—the decks, the ropes, the sails, the rudder, the guns, *et cetera;* but most of all, in Arthur's little cabin, sacred in her eyes from his three years' occupation of it.

"And did you really go around Cape Horn in this cabin? And when you were on the Pacific, did you really sit here and look around you, and see the very same objects that you see now?" she smilingly asked.

"Of course I did," laughed Arthur.

"Well, that seems the quaintest part of a sailor's life, to me! For when we lands people go away we leave home and all our familiar surroundings; but you take your home with you everywhere!"

"So far as a dwelling place makes a home, I suppose we do," said Arthur.

When they had finished their inspection of the ship they were invited into the captain's cabin, where an elegant collation was spread.

After they had partaken of this repast they bade farewell to their hospitable entertainers, and set out on their return home.

The mountain girl was a good walker, and she declared that she was not the least fatigued; and she declined the carriage that Arthur would have called for her.

As they walked up Garrison street, however, talking gayly of the pleasant events of the day, an incident occurred that disturbed the peace of Gladys. As a carriage rolled rapidly past them, she started, turned pale and convulsively clasped the arm of Arthur.

"Why, what ails you, my dearest? Are you afraid of being run over?" inquired Arthur, drawing the trembling little hand closer within his arm.

"Oh, no, no, no; but—didn't you see?"

"What, love?"

"Mrs. Llewellyn was in that carriage!"

"Nonsense!"

"She was, indeed! I saw her! She met my glance and drew back!"

"But even if this be so, why should it disturb you? You are safe."

"Safe! Oh, yes; I know I am safe with you, dear Arthur! I know she cannot separate us now; but still I tremble at the sight of that woman!"

"Sheer nervousness, my darling! Think no more of Mrs. Llewellyn! Her day of power over you is gone," said Arthur, drawing her arm closer to his side.

They sauntered on at a leisurely pace, and at sunset reached their suburban home, where they found the tea table set, and Father Crane, the priest of St. Peter's, there to spend the evening with his sisters.

He was a tall, thin, fair-faced, gray-haired man, very like his sisters, so like them that he had a humorous way of classing himself among them as, "Myself and the other old ladies."

Father Crane was presented in due form to "Colonel and Mrs. Pollard."

Arthur took the first private opportunity of correcting that chronic mistake in his name. But, as Father Crane called the young couple nothing but "sir" and "madam," Arthur had no opportunity of judging whether he profited by the correction.

The priest went away the same evening. And soon after his departure, the family separated and retired.

And thus ended the young couple's holiday week.

The next day, although it was the Sabbath, Arthur was obliged to report for duty. So, after breakfast, Gladys, as before, walked with him down to the gate, to take leave of him there. She was much more cheerful than on their preceding short parting of the week before. No shadow of approaching evil clouded her spirit. He kissed her gayly, and went out of the gate. Then he turned around and lingered a little while, looking at her and talking. And at length he said he really must go. And she stood on tiptoes to kiss him over the gate; and then he laughed and hurried away—she steadily watching him

and he frequently looking back and smiling at her, until he was out of sight.

Then she returned to the house.

Gladys went to church alone that morning. As the walk was very long, she did not go again in the afternoon, but remained quietly at home, while the old ladies went to vespers at their own church. But the young bride was not lonely. Her thoughts were pleasantly occupied with anticipations of her husband's speedy return. He had promised to be back by sunset to tea, and the sun was nearly down.

She walked to the gate to watch for him. And then, as the afternoon was so fine, she strolled out to meet him on his return. She strolled a much longer way from home than she had expected to do when she passed the gate; but still she did not meet him. The sun went down; the shades of evening came on; and still she walked on; but still she did not see him.

She met the old ladies, however, on their return from church; and very much shocked they were to see her.

"Dear me, Mrs. Colonel Pollard, my dear, is this you walking all alone by yourself at this solemn hour of the evening!" exclaimed Miss Polly, and all her sisters joined in the chorus.

"I came out to meet my husband, but he is late, and I have walked farther than I intended. I cannot think what keeps him," said Gladys.

"Why, child, it is likely as the colonel has come the other way and is at home now," said Miss Milly.

"Is there another way?"

"Why, lor', yes, a short cut by the Eastern Branch River."

"Oh, then, I suppose he has taken that path, and is at home. I will go back with you. How fortunate it is that I met you! It would have been dreadful for me to have had to go home alone at this hour," said Gladys.

"It would have been dangerous, my dear," said Miss Jenny.

They walked on rapidly, considering the age of the sisters; but it was quite dark when they reached the house.

Gladys ran in.

"Has my husband returned?" she eagerly inquired of Harriet.

"Lor', no, ma'am! I thought as you would bring him home 'long o' you," said the woman.

"What can keep him?" complained Gladys.

"Duty, my dear child, I reckon. You know these militantary and navial gentlemen's time is not their own," said Miss Polly.

"True! very true! Don't wait tea for him, dear Miss Polly. You are tired, and want your tea, and he may not be home until late. Oh, yes! it is all right!" said Gladys, trying to restrain her impatience, for as yet it was not anxiety that she felt.

"Well, dear, just as you say. We can keep the kettle over the fire, and have fresh tea made for him when he does come, you know," said Miss Milly.

And as the bell rang almost immediately, they all took off their bonnets and went to the table.

After tea, Gladys went and sat upon the porch to watch and listen for the beloved footsteps that she expected every moment to hear. But she heard no sound but the sighing of the wind among the trees, the patter of the falling leaves, and a strange, regular, monotonous flitting over her head, for which she could not account. When, however, her eyes became accustomed to the gloom, and she could clearly see the starlit sky, and the tree-studded ground, and could even discern the distant gate, she saw that the noise was produced by the flitting out of innumerable bats, that came from a hole in the roof of the porch, singly and at intervals of half a minute, and flew off into the night sky.

Gladys was so amazed at the great number that came out, that she began to count the remaining ones as they appeared. And she was so interested in this strange amusement that she forgot her impatience for Arthur's return.

The bats were still flitting out, at the rate of two a minute, and Gladys was still counting them as they appeared, when suddenly Miss Jenny opened the door and spoke to her:

"My dear Mrs. Colonel Pollard, it is half-past nine,

our bedtime; hadn't you better come in out of the night air?"

"Oh, no! please, Miss Jenny. The night air doesn't hurt me. It is so pleasant. You go to bed. I will sit here and wait for my husband. He will soon be here now. And when he comes we will take care to fasten up the house all right," pleaded Gladys.

"Well, my dear, just as you please. Good-night, honey."

"Good-night, dear Miss Jenny."

The old lady retired, and Gladys resumed her lonely watch. She gave over counting the bats, and sat watching and listening. Long, long, she remained there on her dark vigil. Still she was rather impatient than alarmed; for, at last, when she was worn out with watching and she fell asleep on her post, it was with these words on her lips:

"He is on duty; oh, I know it is all right!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE PREY.

"Why, honey! Why, child! Why, Mrs. Colonel Pollard, my dear! Why, you have never been sitting here all night; a-sleeping in the open porch; and a-catching of your death in the night air, with the house door wide open for anybody to come in and cut all our throats and rob the house! Oh, dear! deary me!"

These were the words, accompanied with several gentle shakes, that aroused Gladys from the deep sleep of exhaustion into which she had fallen, and in which she had lain since midnight.

She started up, shivered as with an ague fit, rubbed her eyes, gazed around, saw that it was broad day, and recognized Miss Polly Crane.

"My dear child, whatever did you do such an imprudent thing for? It was enough to a-killed you!" continued the old lady.

While she spoke, Gladys, so suddenly roused from a deep and dreamless sleep, stared around in utter bewilder-

ment, unable to remember where she was or how she came there. But then, as her memory slowly returned, she grew alarmed, looked anxiously at Miss Polly, and exclaimed:

"Oh, Miss Polly, has my husband returned yet? Do you know anything of him?"

"Why, lord, child, how should I? I have just got up and opened the house. And I never was more surprised nor more shocked in my life than I was when I saw you a-sitting there on that identical green bench, with your head leaned down upon your hand, fast asleep. My goodness, honey, whatever did you do it for? Don't you know you risked your life? In the fall of the year, too, when fever 'n' ague is going about like a roaring lion, a-seeking whom it may devour? What made you do it, honey?"

"I fell asleep while I was waiting for my husband! Oh, what can have kept him away all night? But perhaps he might have come home in the night, and passed me in the dark without seeing me, and gone upstairs and gone to sleep," exclaimed Gladys.

And full of this wild idea, she started up and ran away to her chamber to ascertain the truth.

In a moment, however, she came running back, saying:

"He is not there! He has not been there! I might have known it before! Because if he had come home in the night, and passed me in the dark, and gone up into our room, he would have missed me directly and made inquiries and found me. Oh, dear me! what could have kept him out all night?"

"My dear child, didn't you warn me yourself that sometimes he would be away all night on milintary or navial duty?"

"Oh, yes, to be sure I did. It is that which has kept him! Oh, of course, it must be that, and I won't be a fool," said Gladys; but she shivered as she spoke.

"I tell you what, my dear, you have took a bad cold, that's what you have took. Now, come right in to the kitchen fire and warm yourself; that's a dear. And Harriet will have a hot cup of coffee ready in no time," said Miss Polly, leading the way into the house.

Gladys obediently followed, and sat down, shivering,

in the chimney corner, holding her hands over the blaze, and watching the kettle boil, while Harriet ground the coffee.

"Now, what do you think of this child, Harriet? Do you think she hasn't been sitting up all night waiting for that husband of hers to come home, and he on duty all the time?"

"That's bad! I makes no doubt she's cotch cold, by her shivering and shaking so much. I 'vises you to go to bed, honey, and be kivered up warm, and I'll bring you up some hot coffee to the bedside," said the colored woman, kindly.

"Yes, do, child," added Miss Polly.

"No, thank you both very much; but, as soon as I have taken something to give me a little strength and warmth, I am going down to the Navy Yard," replied Gladys.

"Down to the Navy Yard!" exclaimed mistress and maid in a breath.

"Yes; because I cannot bear the suspense. If he was on duty all night, he may also be engaged all day; and he may not be able to return before night—perhaps not even at night; and in the meantime I should be half dying with anxiety. So, odd as the proceeding may seem, I shall go to the Navy Yard, and to his ship, to inquire after him," said Gladys; but as she spoke her teeth chattered like castanets.

"I tell you what—you've got an ague on you now! And you must go to bed. And I will send a messenger down to the ship to make inquiries for you," urged Miss Polly.

"No, no, thank you! Indeed, I could not wait for any messenger to go and come! I must know all as soon as possible," persisted Gladys.

The visit to the ship only revealed the fact that Arthur had left at six o'clock that afternoon with the avowed intention of hastening to his wife, and that since then nothing had been heard of him.

Gladys returned like one in a dream, and nearly fell into the arms of Miss Polly, who received her on the porch.

"Why, my dear, dear, dear child, what is the matter?" inquired Miss Polly, in alarm.

"I don't know. Such a pang caught me in the side, and it took away my breath!" gasped Gladys.

"I'll tell you what, you have got the pneumonia from sleeping out in the porch all night, that's what you've got. Now, what will Colonel Pollard say?" exclaimed Miss Polly.

Gladys did not attempt to reply. Her face expressed so much suffering that the old lady hastened to say:

"Come in! come right in, and go to bed, and we will do what we can for your relief."

Gladys had no alternative. She immediately arose to follow this advice.

Miss Polly drew the young creature's arm within her own, and helped her up the stairs, and into the chamber, and got her to bed.

The old lady's misgivings were well grounded. In a few hours Gladys was extremely ill, and great bodily pain was added to excessive mental anxiety.

The sisters became alarmed, and took the responsibility of summoning their own family physician—Dr. Brown, who when he saw his patient, pronounced her disorder to be typhoid pneumonia, brought on by fatigue, anxiety and exposure to cold. That night Gladys became delirious, and forgot all her troubles in the wanderings of a disordered imagination.

The next day Captain Williamson came in person to inquire after the lieutenant. But the Misses Crane could give him no information, except that he had not been heard from by them or any one in their house, and that his young wife was lying at the point of death. And the captain went away full of sorrow, anxiety and conjecture, to report the case to the police, and to invoke their aid in seeking to discover the fate of the missing man. For many days Gladys hovered between life and death. The three sisters nursed her faithfully, tenderly and disinterestedly. The old priest came and prayed by her. And the captain sent every few days to inquire how the patient progressed.

And still Arthur Powis did not return.

CHAPTER VII.

OMINOUS.

Illness is very expensive. The sisters found it so. Their ready money, advanced without hesitation for the purchase of necessaries for the sickroom, was soon expended. And then, as they did not wish to go in debt, they searched for their patient's purse and found it. It was such a slender little purse, with such a pitiful little sum of money in it—only a few pieces of silver! The sisters felt that it would be cruel to draw upon that small fund. And, smiling and shaking their heads, they put it back. And they borrowed a few dollars from their brother, the priest.

And still Arthur Powis did not return.

Some one else came, however. It was the ninth day of Glady's illness, in the middle of the forenoon. She was lying in a deep sleep that her nurses knew would prove a sleep "of life unto life, or of death unto death;" for this was the highest crisis of her illness; and she must either sink into coma and death, or else awake to full consciousness and life. Miss Milly and Harriet, who had just relieved Miss Polly and Miss Jenny, were sitting, the one on the right side of the bed, and the other on the left, when the sound of wheels was heard, and a carriage stopped at the gate.

Miss Milly arose softly, went to the window, pulled aside the curtain and peeped out.

It was a hackney coach that stood at the gate; and a lady in deep mourning had just alighted from it. She was a tall and stately woman, and she walked slowly and majestically up the avenue leading to the house.

"I suppose Polly and Jenny are a-taking of a nap after their night-watching; so I had better go down and see who this visitor is and what she wants," whispered Miss Milly to her coadjutor of the sickroom. And then she went downstairs for the expressed purpose.

When Miss Milly opened the door to receive the strange visitor, she also saw that the doctor had just

passed through the gate and was coming up the gravel walk.

"Is this Ceres Cottage?" inquired the lady.

"Yes, ma'am, this is Serious Cottage," answered Miss Milly.

"Where the Miss Cranes live?"

"Yes, ma'am, will you walk in?"

"If you please. Are you Miss Crane?" inquired the lady, as she followed her conductor into the parlor.

"No, ma'am; I am Miss Milly. Will you take a seat?"

"Thank you. You have a young lady boarding here, I believe?" inquired the visitor, as she sank into an easy-chair.

"Yes, ma'am; a young married lady. She is a-lying at death's door at the present moment of time."

What effect this announcement had on the visitor, Miss Milly could not know, for just at that moment the doctor quietly entered the room, saying:

"Good-morning, Miss Milly. How is my patient?"

"Good-morning, doctor. Just the same, sir; just precisely the same, for all that I can see. Will you go up now and look at her?"

"If you please," said the doctor; then, bowing to Miss Milly and to the strange lady, he turned to leave the room.

Miss Milly stood hesitating whether to remain with her visitor, or to attend the doctor, and then she said:

"If you will please to excuse me, ma'am, I will show Dr. Brown upstairs."

"No, no, Miss Milly, it is not necessary, I assure you. I suppose there is some one up there with her?" said the doctor.

"Oh, yes, sir; Harriet is there."

"That will do, then. You remain with your visitor," said the doctor, leaving the room.

Miss Milly turned to the strange lady, saying:

"Now, ma'am, what might be your wishes?"

"I wish to see the young lady as soon as possible. Is she very ill?"

"At death's door, ma'am, I am sorry to say. Might you be of any kin to the sweet young lady?"

"I am her aunt by marriage, and her guardian by law. What is her illness?"

"Typhoid pneumonia, the doctor says."

"How long has she been ill?"

"Nine days."

"How long has she been with you?"

"Near about three weeks, ma'am."

"She came here in company with a young officer?"

"Her husband, ma'am. Yes."

"Umph!" groaned the lady, as if in grief, contempt and incredulity.

"And oh, ma'am, what do you think? He is a-missing! But perhaps you know that already, and more besides, and have come to tell us news of him?"

"No, I did not know he was missing; but I am not surprised to hear it—not at all; it might have been expected."

"Ma'am!" exclaimed Miss Milly, in amazement.

"I am sorry to shock you, my good woman; but it is best that the truth should be told—nay, it is absolutely necessary that it should. The young lady in whom you seem to take so much interest——"

"I do; oh, indeed, I really do, ma'am! And so do my sisters, and so does my brother, and so does Harriet—she is our colored woman. Oh! please don't say anything against the young lady, ma'am," said Miss Milly.

"Whatever I say, or omit to say, will not alter the facts, will it?"

"Well, no, ma'am; I do suppose not."

"Now then, what I have to say is this: that about a month ago, or something less, this young lady eloped from my house with the young officer whom she calls her husband."

"And who is her husband, ma'am. I would make my affydavit of it with a free conscience," stoutly asserted Miss Milly.

"That is impossible—quite impossible; she is a minor and cannot legally contract marriage without the consent of her guardian until she is of age. No! She has eloped with this man, whom she cannot legally marry; and it appears that even in this short time he has grown tired of

her and deserted her; and I have come very opportunely to rescue her from a life of sin."

"Oh, ma'am, ma'am, how cruel of you to speak in that way of the very innocentest young couple as ever I seen in all my life! Just for all the world like two blessed children. I'll never believe ill of them, ma'am—never!" said Miss Milly, shaking her head.

"Do you mean—do you dare to hint that I have slandered them!" sternly demanded the lady.

"Oh, dear, no, ma'am! I don't dare to do nothing at all. Only I won't believe no ill of that there blessed young couple—no! if I die for not doing it. So there now!" said Miss Milly, with her aged eyes flashing luridly, like an expiring fire, through her tears.

Before the strange lady could reply to this speech the door once more opened and the doctor re-entered the room.

"How is she, doctor? How is the dear young creature?" inquired Miss Milly wiping her eyes.

"I must answer you as you answered me, using your own very words—'She is just the same,'" replied the doctor.

"Will she get over it? Is there any hope?"

"I do not know whether she will get over it. There is hope, of course. A few hours will decide her fate for life or death."

"Can we do anything now, doctor?"

"Very little. I have left full directions with the colored nurse, who seems to be an intelligent and faithful woman," said the doctor.

"A word with you, if you please, sir," said the visitor, accosting the physician.

"Certainly!" exclaimed the latter, in surprise.

"I wish to speak of the unhappy young lady, your patient."

"I am at your service, madam."

"This young lady has been very imprudent, very unfortunate, and ah! I fear indeed, very culpable also," said the lady, in a tone of deep feeling.

"Madam!" exclaimed the doctor.

"I never will believe it," interrupted Miss Milly.

"A few words will explain how this matter stands:

This young lady is my niece and my ward. About a month ago she eloped from my house with the young officer whom she calls her husband—but falsely calls so, because she is a minor, and cannot legally marry without the consent of her guardian—a consent that has never been given. I, her nearest living relative, as well as her guardian, have come in pursuit of her. I have arrived opportunely, as it seems the unprincipled wretch who enticed her from her home has deserted her, and left her destitute and among strangers."

"I am very much surprised and grieved at what you have told me, madam," said the doctor, elevating his eyebrows.

"Oh, sir, don't believe it! Please don't believe anything against them darling young folks. If they runned away it was for love. And if they is not married, they thinks they is, poor dears! And I know they is, too. They's two angels of goodness, they is; and my brother thinks so, too; and he is a priest, and he ought to know," said Miss Milly, earnestly.

"This simple, tender-hearted creature has been imposed upon. It is not worth our while to reply to her. What I wish to know is this, doctor—whether, if my unhappy young charge should awake to consciousness, it would be safe for me to announce myself to her," said the lady.

"Judging from what you have told me, I should say it would not be safe, madam. Under these unfortunate circumstances, even if she were in good health, your sudden appearance would necessarily be very agitating to her; but in her very critical state, if she were to awake and find you near her, the sight of you might be fatal to her," replied the doctor, coldly.

It was a noticeable fact that all persons now spoke coldly to this lady. There was nothing that she said which might not have been strictly true; there was nothing that she did which might not have been quite right; yet her manner did not inspire confidence; on the contrary, it engendered distrust.

"The life of the young lady is very, very dear to me, indeed," she said, "and I shall be very careful how I make my presence known to her. I suppose that while she lies

in this state of unconsciousness, I might, without danger to her, sit by her and watch?"

"If you would be very careful to note the first indications of a return to consciousness, and retire before she could recognize you," said the doctor.

For days Gladys hovered between life and death, but a change came, and she began to recover. Miss Polly thought to spare her pain by telling her that Arthur had been summoned abruptly to Norfolk to take charge of the store ship *Potomac*. This suited Mrs. Llewellyn's plans, for that crafty woman readily persuaded Gladys that she was her friend again and would send her to Norfolk just as soon as she got well.

You may be sure this good news was better than medicine for the poor girl, and in a few days she and Mrs. Llewellyn drove down to the steamboat wharf.

Arrived there Mrs. Llewellyn alighted and helped Gladys out, and then told the coachman to wait.

Wharf porters crowded around her for orders. She directed one of them to convey the large traveling trunk, that was strapped to the back of the carriage, on to the deck of the steamer. And while the man was obeying she drew her thick veil over her face, and drew the arm of Gladys within her own, and led her on board, and down into the ladies' cabin.

As yet there were no passengers on the boat, and no one occupied the cabin but the stewardess, a respectable looking colored woman.

"What is your name?" inquired Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Rachel, madam."

"Well, Rachel, I wish you to be very attentive to this young lady, who is in extremely delicate health, and who is also excessively nervous."

"Yes, madam—certainly."

"She has come on board to-night to save her from the distress of being waked up early in the morning."

"To be sure, madam. Many ladies does come on over night, when we are to start so early in the morning."

"Then I wish, before any one else comes, that you would give her the best berth at your disposal."

"Certainly, madam; none are yet bespoken; the young lady can take her choice."

"I will choose for her," said Mrs. Llewellyn, as she went through the ladies' cabin, inspecting and comparing the berths. When she had found what she considered the most comfortable one, she threw Gladys' shawl and traveling basket upon it, by way of establishing a claim to it, and said:

"The young lady will occupy this berth."

"Yes, madam—certainly. And now will you please choose one for yourself, ma'am, before the other ladies come?"

"I am not going on this boat."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, ma'am; I thought you was."

"No; that is the reason why I bespeak your best attentions for this young lady. When she gets to Norfolk her friends will meet her. If they should fail to do so you will have a carriage called to take her to a hotel."

"Certainly, ma'am."

"And here is something to help you to remember my directions," said Mrs. Llewellyn, putting a piece of gold into the woman's hands.

Rachel made a curtesy in acknowledgment.

Mrs. Llewellyn went to Gladys, who had sunk, overcome by fatigue, into an armchair.

"My love," she whispered, "you had better not attempt to leave the cabin, either for the deck or the dining-room, until the boat reaches Norfolk."

"Oh, I shall not attempt to do so; I am very, very tired. I think I shall 'turn in,' as dear Arthur used to say, directly."

"That is right. The stewardess—Rachel is her name—will bring you your tea, or anything else you may wish. She will also take your fare and bring your ticket. Now, is there anything else I can do for you before I go?"

"No, dear Aunt Llewellyn, except to take my thanks for all your kindness to a perverse girl."

"Nonsense, my dear. Good-by! God bless you! Give my love to Arthur. Tell him that the same night that saw you embark on the good steamer *Pocahontas* for Norfolk, saw me start in the Winchester stagecoach for Virginia, to be ready to receive you at Kader Idris!

Once more, good-by!" whispered the lady, as she stooped and kissed her dupe and hurried from the cabin.

"No one but the stewardess saw me, and even she did not see me distinctly, for I kept my back to the light and my veil half drooping over my face the whole time I was in the cabin, so that none shall be able to swear to my identity, if it should come to that!" said Mrs. Llewellyn to herself, as she re-entered her carriage.

"Drive for your life to Alexandria! I must catch the opposition boat that left Washington at eight and will leave Alexandria at half-past nine to-night. I must reach Norfolk before Gladys does."

These were the words that Mrs. Llewellyn spelt rapidly upon her fingers as her deaf mute Jude put up the steps and closed the door of the carriage.

The mute obeyed with such promptitude that they reached Alexandria in little more than an hour. The carriage was left in the care of Jude, and Mrs. Llewellyn embarked in the *Banshee* for Norfolk.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FEARFUL DISCOVERY.

On arrival at Norfolk the first person Gladys saw was Mrs. Llewellyn. She divined what the baleful gleam in the older woman's eyes meant, and that a new trap had been laid for her.

"Let me go! Let me go! You have deceived me and entrapped me!" she screamed, as Mrs. Llewellyn's arms closed like the folds of a serpent around her.

"No, I will not let you go! You are now within the jurisdiction of Virginia. I am your guardian. You are my ward. And I take possession of you in the name of the law!" hissed the woman into the tortured ear of her victim.

"I am the lawful wife of Arthur Powis, and your rights of guardianship have been superseded," said Gladys, struggling wildly to release herself.

"You are no one's wife!" exclaimed Mrs. Jay, raising her voice so that the crowd who were beginning to col-

lect, might hear her words. "You are no one's wife! You are a lost, ruined and abandoned girl! But you are still a minor and my ward! And you must come home with me."

"I will not! I will not! You have deceived me with a lie! You have betrayed me with a kiss! You have separated me from my husband! Yes, Mrs. Jay, you have! I know you have! I knew you would do me some fatal harm from the very moment that I recognized you as you passed me in the carriage on Garrison street that last day that I ever spent with my dear Arthur. Oh! that I had only trusted that instinct rather than trusted you! And now you have parted us. Perhaps you have made away with him! Perhaps you have murdered him! I believe you capable of doing so! But I will seek him all over the world! And if he is living, I will find him! And if he is dead, I will avenge him! You have kindled all the Llewellyn blood in my veins now! And once on fire, it is not easily quenched!" cried Gladys, striving desperately to free herself.

"You see, good people, how very mad this poor girl is! Ah! It is easy to read her story, poor thing! The victim of a villain's perfidy!" said Mrs. Llewellyn, sweetly, to the gaping crowd, who sagely nodded their heads.

"It is false! False as your own black, cruel heart, Mrs. Jay! Mrs. Jay! I will not call you Mrs. Llewellyn! You are a dishonor to our family name! Mrs. Jay. Mrs. Jay! Mrs. Jay-bird! Vulture! Kite! Crow! Let me go, I say! Your beak and talons are red with the blood of the innocent, now! Let me go!" screamed Gladys, striving as if for life against death.

"Good people! Will one of you assist me to place this unfortunate girl in the carriage?" said Mrs. Llewellyn, appealing to the crowd.

Several men immediately stepped forward to offer their services.

"You, sir, you look like a family man! Pray lend me your aid; that will be quite sufficient," said Mrs. Jay, selecting from the number that offered a respectable gray-haired man, who immediately laid his hands upon the struggling girl.

But little assistance was needed to subdue her now.

Her superhuman struggles had exhausted all her strength; her intensely strained muscles suddenly relaxed, and she fainted in the arms of her deadly enemy.

"That will do! Put her into the carriage, sir,'" said Mrs. Llewellyn.

And the old man, an unconscious accomplice of crime, lifted Gladys tenderly and placed her in the carriage.

"I thank you very much, sir," said Mrs. Llewellyn, as she also entered the carriage and took her seat at her victim's side.

The old man raised his hat and bowed deeply as the equipage rolled away.

If he had been able to keep the occupants in sight he would have seen the older woman take from her pocket a tiny bottle and force its contents between the teeth of her victim, who a minute later recovered from her fainting spell, only to again fall back unconscious.

Yes, for the time being at least, Mrs. Jay Llewellyn had gained the victory.

When Gladys awoke she found herself in a berth in a Baltimore steamer and Mrs. Llewellyn keeping watch beside her. She looked up wearily at her watcher and said:

"You have deceived and betrayed me, Mrs. Jay. You have entrapped me into your power. But be assured that I know you cannot retain me in your custody; and that there will speedily come a day of deliverance for me, and of retribution for you. And the certain knowledge of this enables me to bear this indignity as calmly as I do."

Gladys spoke firmly, but without the least excitement, for, although the stupefying effects of the drug that was administered to her had passed away, yet the subduing effects of it remained and rendered excitement as yet impossible.

"I am the best friend that you have in the world, my dear, as you will very soon find. Here, drink this coffee."

"If I take it from your hand at all I do it under protest! And if I drink it at all, it is because I think it would be wrong to wantonly injure my own health by abstinence, and I feel myself under the necessity of taking something to keep up my strength, for I must keep up

that in order to withstand you, Mrs. Jay," said Gladys, as she took the cup and eagerly drank the coffee.

"Put your compliance on any ground you like, my love, so that you do yourself good," said Mrs. Llewellyn, smiling grimly.

Gladys drank all the coffee, fixed her eyes defiantly on Mrs. Llewellyn as she returned the empty cup to that lady, and then—suddenly dropped back upon her pillow and fell asleep.

"It works admirably! It could not work better!" said Mrs. Llewellyn, as she locked the door of the stateroom and returned to the deck.

Although she had taken passage on the Baltimore steamer, her destination was not Baltimore city. She would not yet, for many reasons, venture to take Gladys into the State of Maryland. So, about midnight, when the boat stopped at Heathville, a small seaside town on the Virginia shore, she prepared to land.

Gladys, in a state of stupor, was lifted from her berth and borne in the arms of a stout steamboat porter to the landing, and placed in a large traveling carriage that was waiting there for the travelers. Their luggage was next brought from the boat and piled up behind and above the carriage. And then the porters returned to the boat, and the boat steamed on her way up the bay.

Mrs. Llewellyn, left standing by the carriage, beckoned her coachman to come down.

The deaf mute, Jude, obeyed, and stood before his mistress.

Mrs. Llewellyn rapidly spelled upon her fingers the question:

"Are the horses quite fresh?"

The mute nodded.

"Mount your box, then, and drive as fast as is expedient; but don't exhaust the horses at the onset," said Mrs. Llewellyn (with her fingers) as she got into the carriage.

The deaf mute put up the steps, closed the door, mounted the box and drove off.

At sunrise the next morning they stopped at a mountain hamlet and hotel and changed horses. Mrs. Llewellyn did not leave the carriage, but had breakfast brought

to her there; and she ate heartily, and fed her victim on nutritious liquids, and drugged her with sedatives. And then, with fresh horses, resumed their journey.

At noon they stopped at a village at the foot of the mountain, changed horses again, took luncheon in the carriage and with renewed strength went on their way.

At night they reached Kader Idris, and poor Gladys, more dead than alive, was lifted from the carriage and conveyed to her own room.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PALSIED HEART.

Early the next morning Mrs. Llewellyn visited her patient.

Gladys was more awake and alive than she had been at any time since falling again into the hands of Mrs. Llewellyn. The effects of the drug had not, however, entirely passed away; she was still rather quiet, and her voice was calm as she raised her eyes to the face of Mrs. Llewellyn and inquired:

"How came I here? I seem to have come in a dream."

"My dear, I brought you here! To your own old home, to the only home now left you. Shall I explain? I will do so, though the explanation will be a painful one to both of us. Soon after you left Washington I learned, to my astonishment and sorrow, that we had all been deceived and that you were deserted——"

Mrs. Llewellyn paused and looked at Gladys to see how she would receive this communication.

But the large, dark eyes of the young wife were fixed in quiet wonder upon the face of the elder lady as though she did not fully comprehend the purport of her words.

"I learned also that there was no such store ship as the *Potomac* at Portsmouth Navy Yard and that Lieutenant Arthur Powis had certainly not been promoted to the rank of commander, but, on the contrary, had had his name stricken off the navy list for absence from his ship without leave——"

Again Mrs. Llewellyn paused to read the face of the listener.

But the eyes of Gladys were unmoved in their non-comprehending gaze.

"All these facts I learned from the very best and most reliable authority—a naval officer of high rank whom I met at Alexandria. I lost no time in hurrying down to Norfolk after you; for I could well imagine how desperate your situation would be when you should discover the deception that had been practiced upon you—and upon us all."

"My marriage was legal; my husband is true; and my faith in both is not to be shaken," said Gladys, firmly, but very calmly; for the influence of the sedative was still upon her; and the words that in her normal condition would have burst forth in a passion of indignation and grief, now dropped in quietness from her lips.

The entrance of the deaf mute with the breakfast tray put an end to the conversation.

Gladys sat up and ate with some appetite, gently wondering all the while why she could not reflect or grieve, and why she could eat.

In a few days Gladys was out of her chamber and wandering in a listless manner about the house, and vaguely marveling how she, a bereaved wife, scarcely knowing whether she were deserted or widowed, could not either feel or think, and yet could eat and sleep! She was ignorant of the very existence of that powerful drug that was daily administered to her in her food.

Old neighbors, old friends of the family, called to see Gladys. They had heard that she had made a scandal of some sort—had eloped with some young man, who had deserted her, and she had been brought back by her guardian; but they could not ascertain the truth of the story from mere report; and it was much too delicate a matter to mention to any member of the family concerned.

Thus passed the autumn months at Kader Idris, and brought at length December and the Christmas holidays, when Master James Stukely, aged eighteen years, was expected home to spend that festive season.

Mrs. Llewellyn had spoken freely, both in the house

and in the neighborhood, of the approaching marriage of her son and her ward, which she said was fixed to take place at Christmas.

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But Gladys had one true friend in her maid Ailie, who was suspicious of Mrs. Llewellyn's actions and designs. One evening she went to Gladys and taking the hand of her young mistress said earnestly:

"Now, Miss Gladys, long as you's the wife of Marse Arthur, what will he say when he comes back and finds you married to another man, for it seems you's to go to church with this Stukely."

Gladys frowned and looked somewhat perplexed and troubled, but not much either, as she answered, reprovingly:

"What nonsense you talk, Ailie; your brain must be softening. What you fear can never occur; and you offend me when you speak of such a chance. Arthur is true; he will return; and all will be well."

"Laws, honey, I ain't a-saying as he ain't true to you, or as he won't return back again; but I is a-saying as all will not be well unless you rouses of yourself and tends to my words," persisted Ailie.

And, as Gladys did not reply, Ailie stooped forward and looked in her face.

But since her last fretful answer, she had fallen into a deeper apathy than before.

"Humph! Well, laws! It's like lifting a stalled wagon out'n the mud; fast as you gets up one wheel down goes another. Laws! Why didn't I think of it before! Haartzhorn gets people out'n fainty fits, and maybe it may get her out'n her stupid fit. I'll try it," suddenly exclaimed Ailie, as full of eagerness she started up and hurried downstairs.

In a few minutes she returned, bringing a mixed cordial of ammonia, which she placed at the lips of her young mistress.

"Miss Gladys, honey, drink this. It will do you a world of good."

"I do wish, Ailie, that you would let me alone. You are all of you always worrying me to do something, or

take something, or say something," exclaimed Gladys, in a tone of vexation, as she received the glass. But, accustomed lately to do whatever she might be told to do, she drank off the cordial.

It acted like magic.

Without well understanding the case, the poor, ignorant, but zealous colored woman had hit upon the very antidote of the poison, and had administered the most powerful stimulant to counteract the effects of the most potent sedative.

As the ammonia quickly diffused itself through the leadened system of the unhappy girl, and gave her life, warmth and sensibility, she looked up wonderingly in the face of her attendant, and then suddenly threw up her hands to her own face and wept long and passionately.

"Well, I don't most in general like to see people cry; but as for you, honey, I think it is a rale good beginning; shows how you is a-coming to yourself. Take some more haartzhorn," said Ailie. And she fled downstairs, and in an incredibly short space of time returned with a second cordial of ammonia. And this time Gladys drank it off without a word of objection. It would have been too much for any one in a normal state of health, but for Gladys, long benumbed by sedatives, the stimulant was just what she required. As she returned the glass to Ailie she said:

"Oh, my good nurse, what has happened to me? Have I been growing heartless or idiotic? Oh, was ever any one in my position so utterly indifferent? My husband missing, perhaps murdered—Heaven only knows! and I eating, drinking and sleeping; thinking nothing, feeling nothing, and caring for nothing but my own ease! Oh, what has happened to me? And what is going to happen? I feel as if my life, or my senses, or, perhaps, even my soul, were lost, or about to be lost! What is the reason, Ailie?"

"Honey, you hasn't either lost your sense, or your life, or your soul. Nor likewise is you 'ither onfeeling, or onsensible or anything. But, 'deed you has acted so dull and dumb as we all had begun to think as you was 'witched."

"'Witched! What's that?"

"Well, honey, it's 'witched with witchcraft as we-dem thought you was. But you wa'n't 'witched, honey; you was only dosed."

"Dosed?"

"Yes, honey; dosed every day of your life, if not at every singly meal you ate, with a dose to steal your senses away and make you dull and stupid and submissive and easy to manage."

"Oh, Ailie! Can this be true?" exclaimed Gladys, in dismay.

"As true as I am a living sinner, Miss Gladys. Ax yourself! What could a-put you in sich a dead-alive way but doses?"

"Oh, Ailie! Who has done this? But I need not ask! There is but one human being in the world, as I trust and believe, who could be guilty of such black treachery."

"No, sure enough. You needn't ask, Miss Gladys. You know a'ready as it was Mrs. Jay and no one else."

"How did you find it out, Ailie?"

"Honey, when we all seen you a-pining away and losing yourself, not like a young gall, fretting and falling ill, but p'cisely like an ole 'oman a-drapping into her dotage, we all s'picioned Mrs. Jay the first thing. And as I telled you afore, honey, first we s'picioned as how she had 'witched you with her witchcraft. And I set myself to watch her to see how she did it. And hadn't I a time of it, a-following up that old 'oman and a-keeping out of her sight? For, laws bless you, child, ef she had a-diskivered me a-spying on to her, my life wouldn't a-been worth the snuff of a candle; she'd a-dosed me next. Well, honey, I bored gimblet holes in out o' the way places, in doors and partitions and sich. And at last, this precious evening, I diskivered something! She was in the physic-room, and I stole into the pantry and peeked at her through my gimblet hole. And I seen her make the doses. But that didn't prove nothink. She might a-been making innocent physic for some o' the poor folks round. So I stole away and hid myself in the parlor cupboard; 'cause you see, honey, the first tea bell had ringed, and I knowed how she would come there next. Sure 'nough, so she did. And I peeked at her through another peek-hole; and I seen her—while she was a-sitting there all

alone by herself afore you come in—I seen her, I say, pour one of the little doses into your teacup and then kiver up the dose with cream and sugar—and then you come in and drank it!"

Gladys could scarce be restrained from rushing into the presence of Mrs. Jay and denouncing her; but Ailie showed her that no good cause would be served by this. So Gladys determined to remain silent on the subject, and to be careful of what she ate and drank in the future.

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CHAPTER X.

GUILE FOR GUILE.

The next morning the breakfast parlor at Kader Idris wore quite a festive aspect.

A roaring fire of hickory logs blazed in the broad, old-fashioned chimney; deep-cushioned chairs were drawn up on each side of the hearth; a thick red carpet covered the floor, and heavy crimson curtains excluded the wintry blast.

In the middle of the room stood the breakfast-table, draped with its snowy damask, adorned with its best silver and Sevres china, and covered with all the delicacies and luxuries of the place and the season.

The room was as yet vacant.

Mrs. Llewellyn and her son, James Stukely, entered together.

The last named individual was a tall, long-limbed, narrow-shouldered, hollow-chested, sickly-looking lad of about eighteen years of age. He had a small head, covered with scanty, sandy hair; a long white face; a receding forehead, and depressed chin, that made his thin, aquiline nose look something like the beak of a bird; and light-blue eyes, of no sort of expression. He was dressed in a clerical suit of black, with a white cravat.

He was passing through college with very little benefit to himself. He was capable of being educated up to a certain low point, but not above it. Such was the mate proposed by Mrs. Llewellyn for the bright, beautiful and intelligent daughter of General Llewellyn.

Mrs. Llewellyn was speaking, as she preceded her son into the breakfast-parlor:

"This escapade of Gladys does not seriously affect her honor, you must know, Stukely."

"Ah, indeed!" exclaimed the young gentleman.

"Certainly not. She believed herself a wife, and so, though the marriage was illegal, she must be held blameless."

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Stukely.

"Arthur Powis is missing."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Yes; I told you so before. And it is not certainly known whether he has abandoned his supposed wife, and at the same time deserted the service, or whether he has been robbed and murdered."

"Extraordinary!"

"In any case, Gladys is free; was always free, in point of fact, since the marriage was illegal."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Yes; so now the way is clear for you to woo and wed the wealthy heiress of Kader Idris, and become one of the richest landed proprietors of the country."

"Extraordinary!"

"James Stukely!" exclaimed the lady, impatiently, "I wish, once for all, that you would give up that idiotic and very irritating habit you have of interjecting 'Ah, indeed!' and 'Extraordinary!' into the conversation, and saying nothing else."

"But what do you want me to say, mother?"

"Bah! say anything to show that you have listened to, and thought about, what I told you. Say what you think!"

"Well—I think—suppose she won't have me?"

"She will have you if you ask her."

"Ah, indeed!"

"I shall advise her to do so; and she is so docile now that she will do anything I advise."

"Extraordinary!"

"There you are again!"

"My darling, how are you this morning? Here is your Cousin James, so anxious to see you and pay his respects," said Mrs. Llewellyn, as Gladys entered.

"How do you do, Cousin Gladys? I am sorry to see you looking so badly," said Mr. Stukely, snatching up the hand that Mrs. Llewellyn had let go, and making as if he would kiss her; but Gladys drew back, and Mr. Stukely had not the impudence to follow up.

Mrs. Llewellyn frowned on him, and then rang the bell for the coffee to be brought in.

Gladys did not speak; she looked vacantly from the mother to the son, and then sank languidly into her place at the table.

Mrs. Llewellyn and Mr. Stukely took their places. The coffee was brought in, and breakfast began.

Mrs. Llewellyn filled out a cup and handed it to her ward.

Gladys took it, but her hand trembled excessively, and cup and coffee fell from it to the floor.

"How very nervous you are this morning, my dear!" said Mrs. Llewellyn, in a tone that she wished to make compassionate, but only succeeded in making querulous, as she rang the bell.

Ailie, as by previous arrangement with Gladys, answered the summons.

"Bring a fresh cup and saucer here, and then pick up these piece of broken china and wipe up the slop," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

When her orders were obeyed, she filled out a second cup of coffee, which with her own hands she placed safely before Gladys.

Gladys acted skillfully—adroitly evading every attempt of Mrs. Llewellyn to administer a sedative or to force her into a *tête-a-tête* with James Stukely. And in the absence of the deadly drug, her mind rapidly regained its healthy tone.

But in the same proportion that her intellect recovered power and her will strength, her anxiety and distress at her husband's mysterious disappearance and prolonged absence revived and increased. She remembered, however, that a man of Arthur Powis' rank and profession could not disappear from the world without creating the greatest sensation, and setting on foot the most diligent investigation. She remembered also that she had been enticed away from the city, and entrapped

into this remote country house, before she had any opportunity of joining in the search for her missing husband.

And so she resolved to write to certain parties in Washington. She wrote to the Secretary of the Navy, and also to the captain of the *Neptune*, entreating them to inform her what, if any, intelligence had been received of the missing lieutenant. And she intrusted the letters written to Ailie, to be posted at Standwell.

She knew that more than a week must elapse before she could hope for answers; and she resolved to bear the suspense as well as she could. But as day followed day without bringing her any comfort, her anxiety and distress increased. And the most difficult part of her acting was to conceal from the lynx eyes of Mrs. Llewellyn this growing mental anguish, that must certainly, if perceived, have aroused that lady's mind to a suspicion of the truth.

Meanwhile Christmas Day drew near—Christmas Day, which Mrs. Llewellyn had resolved to desecrate with the forced nuptials of her ward with her son.

In everything, except one, Gladys was all apathetic docility; and Mrs. Llewellyn believed her to be still under the influence of the drugs which she supposed that she daily administered, but which Gladys always contrived to evade. That one thing to which Gladys would not submit was the marriage engagement to James Stukely. To every other proposition she answered, indifferently, "Yes, if you like," or "Just as you please." But to this one she always replied, "No, I will not," or "I'll die first."

"It is very provoking," said Mrs. Llewellyn to her promising son. "I can get her to do anything in the world I ask her to do except to consent to marry you."

"Extraordinary," said Mr. Stukely.

"But never mind. The preparations for the wedding shall go on all the same as if she had consented, and when all is ready I will dress her, and lead her down before the parson. And she will obey mechanically, and be married before she knows it."

CHAPTER XI.

THE FOILER FOILED.

Mrs. Llewellyn kept her word, and vigorously pushed forward the preparations for the wicked wedding.

A special license was procured. The services of the Rev. Mr. Kellogg, an old, imbecile and superannuated minister of the gospel, who had long retired from the pulpit, were engaged. And the ceremony was arranged to be performed in the drawing-room of Kader Idris, at an early hour on the morning of Christmas Day.

A brighter Christmas Day than that on which the wicked wedding was arranged to take place never dawned. A heavy snow had fallen during the night and covered the ground thickly with a bridal mantle of pure white. Toward morning the sky had cleared off very cold, and the frost had adorned every tree and bush with crusted clusters of pearls and diamonds, so that when the sun arose the whole scene was lighted up with dazzling splendor.

Within the house all was bustle and preparation. The members of the household were early astir. In the drawing-room a white marble table was arranged and decorated as an altar, and the "church service," the marriage license and the wedding ring laid ready upon it. In the dining-room a luxurious breakfast was prepared for a small party. And in the little morning-room a preliminary meal was laid for three—Mrs. Llewellyn, Mr. Kellogg and Mr. Stukely.

Gladys, in her chamber, was engaged in an admirable piece of acting. She seated herself in her dressing-chair, and became perfectly quiescent while the maid tortured her straight, black hair into ripples and plaits, and while they pearl-powdered and rouged her pure, pale face. And when they told her to stand up and have her dress put on, she obeyed like an automaton. The veil and wreath were added, the gloves slipped on, the bouquet placed in her hand, and she was pronounced to be ready.

"And now, my darling girl, you will go down to be married—will you not?" whispered Mrs. Jay.

"Oh, yes, Aunt Jay, I will go down to be married," replied Gladys, heavily. "But I will not be married after I get down, for all that," she added, mentally.

"It is all right. The drug works. She will now do all that she is told to do," said Mrs. Llewellyn to herself.

Mr. Stukely was waiting in the passage to receive her.

"Take her on your arm, James, and lead her downstairs," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

Mr. Stukely advanced and drew Gladys' arm within his own, saying, as he did so:

"Cousin, I don't quite know as a fellow is doing right in marrying a girl when he don't even know whether a girl likes a fellow or not."

"Never mind!" said Gladys, sleepily.

"Well, if you don't mind, I am sure I needn't."

"All right."

"Oh, if it is all right, enough said. Come along!"

And Mr. Stukely drew the arm of Gladys within his own and led her downstairs.

The lower hall was lined with the servants of the family, all in their holiday clothes, assembled to witness the marriage. They were drawn up on either side, leaving a way free for the bride and bridegroom to pass. There was not one smiling face among them. All were grave; some were tearful. Ailie stood near the drawing-room door, where she could see all that was going on.

Stukely led Gladys through this array of domestics on intc the drawing-room.

There was no one in the room except the Rev. Mr. Kellogg, who stood immediately before the marble table that had been arrayed and decorated as an altar.

Stukely led Gladys up before the minister.

Mrs. Llewellyn followed and stood behind them.

The doors had been left open, that the servants might witness the marriage.

The minister was a tall, finely-formed, most reverend-looking patriarch, whose mild blue eyes beamed with benevolence, whose fair, noble features were seamed with many wrinkles, and whose long, white hair, parted over his forehead, rolled down each side in flowing silvery locks

upon his black cassock. He smiled the feeble smile of age upon the young couple before him, and murmured to himself, as if thinking aloud:

"Why, I married her grandmother, and I married her mother, and now to think that I should live to marry her!"

"Extraordinary!" muttered the bridegroom, in reply, although nobody had spoken to him.

"Be so good as to commence the ceremony, if you please, sir. My ward is not well, and may not be able to bear the fatigue of standing long," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

The old minister bowed gravely in reply—and then opened the book and, in an impressive voice, began to read the preliminary exordium.

Gladys allowed him to proceed until he arrived at these words:

"If any person here present can show just cause why this man and this woman may not lawfully be joined together, let them now declare it, or else forever after hold their peace."

During the short pause that followed Gladys turned and looked steadfastly into the face of Mrs. Llewellyn, but the eyes of that lady were gravely bent upon the ground.

The minister proceeded with the ceremony. Addressing now the young pair before him, he uttered the solemn adjuration of the ritual:

"I require and charge you both, as ye shall answer at the dreadful Day of Judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it."

"I will!" said Gladys, suddenly tearing off her bridal veil and wreath and casting them from her.

The old minister dropped his book and stared with astonishment. Though he had distinctly challenged this interruption, he had not expected it.

The bridegroom muttered, "Extraordinary!"

The servants pressed in from the hall to see what was the matter.

Mrs. Llewellyn laid her hand heavily upon the shoulder of the bride, and in a deep, low, stern voice whispered:

"Gladys! what are you about? Be silent until you are told to speak, and then speak as you are told."

Then, turning to the minister, she said, aloud:

"Proceed with the ceremony, sir. My ward is only eccentric and capricious; surely you knew that before! It is useless to pay any attention to what she says. Proceed."

"But I cannot until I hear what the young lady has to say," pleaded the old man.

Gladys lifted up her head. Excitement had brought back light to her eyes and color to her cheeks and lips. She looked strong, spirited and beautiful as she spoke.

"You just now, in the words of the ritual, charged us both, as we should answer at the dreadful Day of Judgment, if either of us knew any cause why we could not lawfully be united, now to confess it. I will! I have waited long for the opportunity to speak. I gladly embrace it."

"She is mad—perfectly mad! Pray, sir, pay no attention to her ravings, but proceed with the ceremony," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"But, my good lady, if the young girl is mad, she is incompetent to marry," objected the minister, closing his book and laying it on the table.

"Sir, I am no lunatic," said Gladys. "You must be very much surprised that I should have come before you to be married and then should have objected to the proceedings. Oh, sir, when you have heard the story that I have to tell, you will understand that in doing as I have done lay my only chance of deliverance from persecution and danger. I consented to be dressed in bridal array and led before you as a bride-elect only that I might have this opportunity of disclosing my real situation to one whose very cloth obliges him to be just and merciful. Sir, that lady there, who would force or betray me into a felonious marriage, knows that I am already a wife."

"A wife! She is a raving maniac!" cried Mrs. Llewellyn.

"My good lady, if she is indeed a raving maniac, she is as incompetent to enter into this marriage as if she were already a wedded wife. But let me hear what she has to say. Explain yourself, my child."

Thus encouraged, Gladys commenced, and poured forth to attentive ears the history of her marriage. And so long as she spoke of the events that had preceded the mysterious disappearance of her husband and her consequent severe illness at Ceres Cottage, her story was clear, concise and perfectly consistent, and evidently impressed the old minister with its fidelity and truthfulness. But when she came to talk of her voyage down the Chesapeake in search of her husband, her adventures at Norfolk, her meeting with Mrs. Llewellyn, her journey back into Virginia, and her sufferings at Kader Idris under the influence of drugs administered by Mrs. Llewellyn, her narrative grew obscure, rambling, and often contradictory, so that the old minister was shaken in his faith.

There were many good reasons for this difference in the style of the poor girl's narration. The events that had preceded the disappearance of her husband had all transpired while she was yet sound in mind and body. The events that followed had all happened while she was ill, imperfectly convalescent, or under the influence of stupefying drugs. Therefore, her remembrance of the first epoch was perfectly distinct, while her recollection of the second was very obscure. Another difficulty in the second part of her narrative was this—that while speaking of the drugs that had been administered to her, she felt in honor bound to refrain from exposing the agency of Ailie in discovering the treachery.

But the old minister, not having the key to the mystery, simply thought that Gladys was a little touched in the brain.

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Llewellyn, as soon as Gladys had finished her narrative, "and what do you think of that?"

"I do not know what to think of all this, madam. I must take time to reflect. But of one thing I am sure—that the young lady is no fit subject for matrimony, and that, therefore, I have no further business here," said the feeble old man, rising and preparing to depart.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Gladys, starting up and clasping her hands in agony. "Do not quite desert my cause! It was not for this that I came before you! It was to appeal to you for help, for deliverance! There must be some power, somewhere, that is able to free me from the control

of a false guardian! There is an Orphans' Court, is there not? Oh, sir, only try to procure for me a hearing from the Orphans' Court, and I will thank and bless you forever."

"My good child," said the old man, doubtfully, "I married your grandmother, and I married your mother, and I almost married you. And I would do anything in reason for you, for I pity you very much. But in this case I really do not know how to proceed. On the one hand, it seems only just that an orphan girl should have a hearing before the Orphans' Court if she should desire it, for that court was established for her benefit. But, then, on the other hand, it seems insulting to this lady to appeal from her authority, for she is a lady of the highest standing in character and position, and she is the guardian selected for you by the will of your late lamented parents. And as such you are bound to obey her. I think, my dear child, that you had better submit yourself to her guidance, for she really seems to have your interests very much at heart —yes, even to the extent of taking you for her daughter-in-law, notwithstanding misfortunes that might have precluded any less just and generous woman from doing so. Be patient, my child. It is all for your good."

"For my good? For my good to be separated from my own true husband! for my good to be drugged until my heart and brain are both so softened that I have neither will nor intellect enough to save me from crime and ruin! For my good to be forced or betrayed into a felonious marriage with a half idiot! If you consider these things for my good, Mr. Kellogg, you may go away and forget me; but otherwise, in the name of Heaven and by the love you bore my parents, I adjure you, I implore you, intervene to save me! procure me a hearing before the Orphans' Court!" exclaimed Gladys, dropping on her knees and seizing the hands of the minister in an agony of supplication.

"You distress me beyond measure, my dear child. These are but sickly fancies of yours. Your guardian is your friend. The medicines she gives you are to soothe your mind and heal your body. The marriage she proposes for you is to repair the wrongs done you by another. Your mother, your guardian angel, could do no more for

you than this excellent aunt is doing. Submit yourself to her," said the old man, trying to raise the unhappy girl to her feet.

"Oh, Father Almighty! is there no help in earth or heaven!" cried Gladys, sinking down overwhelmed by despair.

"Sir," said Mrs. Llewellyn, "this must be a very painful scene to you. And as your presence only serves to excite my poor ward, perhaps you had better withdraw and leave her with me."

"Gladly, madam. Poor girl! Poor girl!"

"Of one thing I must beg to caution you, sir. It is, not to say anything of the mad story told you by this unhappy girl; nor ever of the true story related to you in confidence by myself. In fact, I beg that you will not mention anything that has transpired here to-day, for it is very painful to have family affairs canvassed by the gossips of the neighborhood," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"I understand you, madam, and I will be discreet. Poor girl! Poor girl! I married her grandmother, and I married her mother, and I had nearly married her! And to think it has come to this!"

And, maundering on in this way, the doting old parson departed, leaving Gladys once more in Mrs. Llewellyn's sole power.

CHAPTER XII.

LIFE AND DEATH.

If you look upon the map of the United States, you will see a queerly-shaped peninsula lying between the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, and comprising the two counties of Worcester, in Maryland, and Accomac, in Virginia. Nothing but the boundary line between the two counties separates the two States.

It was in Worcester County, in Maryland, on the Chesapeake, that the little seaside village, once called Rogues' Harbor, but now bearing another name, was situated.

And it was but a few miles distant across the boundary line, in Accomac County, Virginia, that the old, dilapi-

dated mansion house that went by the name of Forest was located. It belonged to the impoverished family of Brant Stukely, of whom James Stukely was now the sole representative. This deserted and forgotten dwelling stood in the midst of a few acres of neglected ground—a ruin in a wilderness. No public road passed near it, and the neighborhood around it was so sparsely settled that few human beings ever approached it; its very existence was ignored or unknown.

To this desolated home Mrs. Lelwellyn, who loved luxury, sent first of all some very comfortable furniture. She sent this by steamboat, in charge of her deaf-mute, Jude, who landed it on an obscure part of the Virginia shore, and conveyed it thence quietly by wagons to the old mansion.

And a week after this Mrs. Llewellyn herself arrived, accompanied by her son, James Stukely, and her confidential maid, Ennis, and having in charge the unhappy young wife of Arthur Powis.

It may seem strange and incredible that any young married woman should submit to such oppressions and outrages as Gladys endured at the hands of Mrs. Llewellyn. But—youthful, friendless, inexperienced, separated from her husband, bowed down by sorrow, and, further, subdued by sedative drugs—what could poor Gladys do?

It was a dreary December night when they arrived at the Forest Lodge. And Gladys entered the doors of the old house as hopelessly, as submissively, as ever condemned criminal passed through the gloomy portals of a prison. For to her there seemed "No light in earth or heaven."

As soon as they were settled in their new home, Mr. James Stukely departed for the University of Virginia, at Charlottesville, and life at Forest Lodge subsided into the most dreary of all monotonous routines.

The small estabilshment consisted only of Mrs. Llewellyn, her unhappy ward, and the two servants, Ennis and Jude.

Ailie was no more numbered among the household. Mrs. Llewellyn had discovered her bringing letters from the post office to Gladys, and on that day the faithful maid disappeared.

Silently the deaf-mute served the meals in the dining-room; sullenly the maidservant performed her duties in the bedrooms; surlily Mrs. Llewellyn and Gladys met and parted at the table or the fireside. Not one event worth recording transpired; not a conversation worth repeating happened. And thus the weeks of the great frost slowly passed away.

But if Gladys, depressed by monotony, saddened by bereavement, and tortured by anxiety, did not go mad, it was because she became gradually corscious of a circumstance that filled her heart with a vague delight and invested her life with a deep interest. In a word, she discovered that she was destined to become a mother. And from the time that she became certain of this fact her spirits revived, her appetite returned, and, despite the unpropitious circumstances, she grew almost happy and healthy. For Nature is a tender mother and skillful nurse, and she was doing her best for Gladys.

And thus the latest winter days passed away and the spring opened. Gladys amused herself by making pretty little caps and dresses for the expected little stranger, and Mrs. Llewellyn quietly informed herself respecting the physicians of the country, one of whom it might become necessary to call in, in an emergency. By means of Jude, the deaf-mute, she was made acquainted with the fact that a certain doctor, a very skillful physician from New York, had recently settled at a place called Rogues' Harbor, a few miles distant across the line and on the Chesapeake Bay. Rogues' Harbor was in Maryland, and that Mrs. Llewellyn thought an advantage where secrecy was to be desired. So she resolved, in the event that medical aid should be needed, to call him in and fee him liberally and swear him to secrecy.

It was in the midst of a midnight tempest of thunder, lightning and rain that the child of Gladys Powis was born. The young mother had been very ill, and it was only in the latest hour, when her life was in the greatest danger, that the deaf-mute was sent through a night of storm and darkness to bring the doctor to her assistance. To his superior skill and experience alone, under Divine Providence, the mother and child owed the preservation of their lives.

The doctor divined the character of Mrs. Llewellyn and detected her designs upon the life of the babe, and he was earnestly entreated by the alarmed and unhappy mother to take charge of her child, and tenderly he carried the little creature home and committed it to the care of his w. e.

When two or three days had passed, and Gladys had become impatient for a visit from her kind physician and anxious for news of her absent child, she forced herself to do that which was of all things the most repugnant to her—namely, to question Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Why does not the doctor come and see me?" she inquired.

"He was here this morning while you were asleep. He came up and looked at you, but would not allow you to be waked up, as he said that sleep would do you more good than anything else. He left you very soon, as he had a patient in extremity to visit," replied Mrs. Llewellyn, lying without an instant's hesitation.

"Oh, dear me, how provoking! Did he speak of my child?"

"Yes; he said it was growing finely."

"Thank Heaven But now, when he comes next, if I should be asleep, I wish to be waked up, so that I may ask him about my child, and hear from his own lips how she is."

"My dear, he says that he shall not come again; that you are getting along so well as to render his further attendance unnecessary."

"How aggravating that is Well, I must write to him and ask him to tell me all about my child—where she is, and who has got her; and what sort of a house she lives in, and what sort of a woman the nurse is, and if there are any other children, and a number of particulars that I must be made acquainted with," said the young mother, firmly.

"Well, my dear, you shall write at once," replied the artful woman, who immediately propped Gladys up in the bed, and placed a writing-case before her.

"Stay—what is that doctor's name?—Doctor—Doctor——"

"Dr. Thomas Frorthingham, my dear."

Gladys wrote her letter, filled it with the anxious questionings of an earnest young mother, folded and sealed it, and then, panting, directed and gave it into the hands of Mrs. Llewellyn, to send to the nearest post office, saying to herself, with a sigh:

"I have no alternative but to trust her, since I have no one else to trust. Oh, I hope she will be honest about this letter, especially as there seems to be no inducement for her to be otherwise."

The next evening Gladys received the forged answer, and this was it:

MY DEAR LADY:—Your note was placed in my hand, at the very moment that I had sat down to write to you, to communicate a sorrowful piece of intelligence, which gives me as much pain to write as it will give you to read. Your little babe is no more. It was suddenly seized with convulsions this morning, which, in the course of a few hours, notwithstanding that the utmost skill of medical science was exerted to save it, proved fatal. We attribute its sudden illness and death to some original organic imperfection; though whether the brain, the lungs, or the heart was the most deficient in vital power, nothing short of an actual autopsy could demonstrate. Let me hope that as a Christian woman, you will resign yourself to the will of Divine Providence, and not sorrow "as one without hope" after a little creature, whose early death has saved it from all the temptations, sins and dangers of this world, and ensured to it the purity, bliss and safety in heaven. I have the honor to be, dear lady, your obedient servant,

THOMAS FRORTHINGHAM, M. D.

CHAPTER XIII.

A STARTLING APPARITION.

Mrs. Llewellyn departed suddenly from Forest Lodge, and took her unhappy victim directly to New York, in the hope that the wilderness of the city would afford a more secure hiding place than even the wilderness of the woods had been.

She took a furnished house in one of the most crowded streets in central Gotham. And there she secluded her ward in a solitude even more retired than that of Forest Lodge, or of Kader Idris had been.

Here Gladys was consigned to a front chamber on the

fourth floor, away up near the top of the house. And as the lower sashes of the windows were guarded like those of a child's nursery, she could not put her head out, or look down into the street below. She could only glance through the upper sashes, at the sky above, or at the tops of the houses over the way.

But yet Gladys did not seem to miss her liberty, or even wish for a more extended prospect. By the continual administration of powerful sedatives she had been reduced to a state of physical and mental feebleness resembling second childhood.

The room to which she was restricted was, however, furnished with everything that could contribute to the comfort and amusement of a child and an imbecile. In the first place, it was of ample size, well ventilated, and connected with a spacious dressing closet.

Next, in addition to the usual set of sumptuous chamber furniture, it was provided with a fine pianoforte, a harp, a guitar, and even an accordion. The wallls were decorated with bright pictures, and the mantelshelf was adorned with Dresden china images of beaux and belles, and shepherds and shepherdesses.

But beside these there was one toy which seemed a bitter mockery of the poor, bereaved, young mother. This was a large, life-sized wax doll-baby—one of those productions of French mechanical art that, "by some devilish centrip strange," was made to shut its eyes when laid down, open them when raised up, and to utter a low cry when squeezed. This doll was dressed in every particular as a young living infant, and laid in a pretty *berceaunette,* or decorated basket cradle.

And although poor Gladys had still reason enough left to know that this doll was not her own living child, yet she was so strangely silly as to lavish upon it a wealth of tenderness and care, as if she imagined that it could benefit by her attention, or suffer by her neglect.

Every morning she dressed it in fine clothes, and sent it out by Ennis for an airing. And every night she undressed it, pressed it to her comfortless bosom, and spent hours in rocking it in a low nursing-chair and singing to it a soft lullaby.

By this time, too, she had been persuaded to believe in

her husband's death, and had been familiarized with, if not reconciled to, the idea of her marriage with James Stukley. For on one occasion, when Ennis, who had begun to pity and to love her wronged and helpless charge, said to her:

"Oh, Miss Gladys, how can you kiss and hug an unsensible wax doll as if it was a Christian baby, and could love you for your care?"—the poor young mother answered with the ringing laughter of her earlier girlhood:

"Why, Ennis, if I am to have a wooden head for a husband, why not a wax head for a baby? It is all right, my good Ennis, believe me."

Next to the occupation she found in the care of her "baby," she derived her greatest solace from music. She often sang her favorite songs, accompanying herself on the pianoforte, harp or guitar, as the case required. And often the passengers of the street below would pause to listen to the sublime strains of divine harmony, that seemed the echo of the angels' anthems in heaven, or to the simple trills of delicious melody that seemed showered down from the gladness of some songbird soaring high in the empyrean.

The stately, old-fashioned mansion on the opposite side of the way was owned and inhabited by a wealthy maiden lady somewhat passed her youth, Miss Wendover. And often she threw open her own windows, and sat within the soft shadows of their lace curtains listening to the plaintive voice of the invisible singer—"the caged bird," as some people called her because of the barred windows, and beautiful voice—the "mad lady," as others less poetical suspected and asserted her to be.

But among all—neighbors or passengers—who listened to her music, there was not one who seemed so much spellbound by her voice as a poor workman who was engaged with many others in building a large hotel on the same street, and who passed under her windows about four times every day on his way to his work and to his meals. Many were the half days' wages the poor fellow was docked of for wasting his employer's time in listening to the invisible, sweet singer; for no matter whether he was on his way to work, or to meals, or how great the pressure of business or of hunger might be, the sound of

her voice was enough to arrest his hurrying footsteps and to keep him standing before the house, gaping and staring up into her windows.

On one of these occasions, Mrs. Llewellyn, sitting at her drawing-room windows, within the shadow of the crimson curtains, unseen herself, but seeing everything that passed, noticed this strange, music-mad laborer standing on the sidewalk with the hod on his shoulder, gazing up toward her captive's windows.

Something in his air attracted her attention and fixed her regards scrutinizingly upon his figure; but when he raised his old hat from his head, and turned his face a little more toward the light, she uttered a low cry, and sank back in her seat, pale and faint.

A minute after she reached out her hand and touched the bell that brought her maid to her presence.

"Ennis, come here. Stand just here behind the curtain, and look at that man," she said.

"Gracious, goodness me alive! I beg your pardon, ma'am, but—he looks like the ghost of Master Arthur!"

"Ghost—stuff! But you are right; the likeness is a very striking one. Ennis, go around to the alley gate and watch that man. When he leaves the spot slip after him and follow him; find out his name, and occupation, and place of abode; and come back and tell me."

"Yes, madam, if—if I can," said the girl, obediently, leaving the room.

While Mrs. Llewellyn gazed, the man suddenly started as if from a dream, sighed, shook his head, shifted his hod upon the other shoulder, and, dropping his chin upon his breast with an air of dejection, walked on.

Ennis came out of her hiding place and dogged his footsteps.

Mrs. Llewellyn went away from the window and recommenced her troubled walk up and down the room. And so she continued to pace the floor for nearly an hour, and until the return of Ennis.

"Well, girl?" she then demanded, throwing herself into a chair.

"Well, ma'am, he is a poor, simple, innocent fellow. His name is Billy Simmons, and he is a stonemason's

laborer, at work on Miss Wendover's great hotel at the corner of the street," said Ennis, catching her breath.

"Very well. You have done very well, indeed, Ennis. Now, I wish you to watch until that man goes by again in returning from his work, and I wish you to watch him home, and find out where he lives."

That evening, when Ennis returned, she found her mistress still in the drawing-room waiting for her.

"Well, Ennis, have you run your man to earth?"

"Yes, ma'am; and a fine chase I had. He lives away up on Catherine street, at an old washwoman's. I followed him all the way. At one time I feared as he would get into a 'bus; but I made up my mind if he did I would also; but he didn't, and I followed him all the way to Catherine street on foot. And when I saw him go in at a house where there was a laundress sign a-hanging out, I made so free as to go in on pretense of wanting some washing done. And while I was talking to the laundress—which she was quite a ole 'oman—she says, says she, to the man, 'Billy, your supper's on the kitchen table. Go eat it.' And the man says, says he, 'All right, ma'am,' and he goes. 'Is that handsome young man your son, ma'am?' says I. 'Who! Billy? Law, no,' says she, 'but I thinks as much on him as if he was. He's a boarder, he is.' 'And how long have you known him, ma'am?' says I. 'A many months,' says she. 'But what makes you ax questions. Is you in love with our Billy, young 'oman?' 'No, I thank you, ma'am,' says I, 'and as we can't agree about the price of the washing, I think I had better go away.' And so I come away and got on to a omnibus, and here I am, ma'am."

Mrs. Llewellyn, as soon as she found herself alone, struck the bell that brought the deaf-mute to her presence.

"I have been waiting for you all the afternoon and evening. Where have you been?" was the question she rapidly spelled upon her fingers.

He answered by the same means:

"Madam, you remember you gave me half a holiday. I took it and went to Harlem."

"I had forgotten. Now attend——"

The mute nodded.

"Is Arthur Powis dead?"

"When I killed the young lion I brought you his skin in proof of his death," answered the mute, slowly spelling the words on his fingers.

"You brought me the crushed cap and the blood-stained uniform of the lieutenant; constructive proof, but not conclusive proof, of his death."

"How could I have got the clothes off his living body?"

"You might have stunned him, and he might afterward have recovered."

"If he had recovered, would he not have raised the alarm? would he not have returned to his wife?"

"One would think so, but—his body was never found. That in itself is strange."

"His body sank at once to the bottom of the Anacostia River. The fishes have eaten his body, and the gluttons have eaten the fishes. By and by worms will have eaten the gluttons."

"You horrible creature, stop that! I suppose the lieutenant is really dead. But there is an individual in this city who so strongly resembles Arthur Powis that the circumstance gives me much uneasiness. Have you ever chanced to see such a person?"

The mute slowly and emphatically shook his head.

"He is a laborer, at work on the new hotel at the corner. He carries a hod, and passes here three or four times a day. Watch for him."

The mute nodded his head low in token of obedience.

"Now go; I have letters to write."

Jude bowed very humbly and withdrew.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SECOND ATTEMPT.

Two days later James Stukely arrived, and Mrs. Llewellyn proceeded to make all arrangements for the consummation of the long-delayed wedding. Gladys accepted everything as a matter of course, scarcely realizing what was passing around her.

James Stukely had insisted on being married in a

church this time, and the church that had been selected by Mrs. Llewellyn was at the west end of the town, two good miles from their residence. This was a precaution adopted by the lady to prevent the bridal party from being followed by all the idlers in the street, as it certainly would have been had they gone to any church in the immediate neighborhood.

On the marriage morning they set out early for St. Asaph's. But in spite of all precautions the news that a wedding was to come off at St. Asaph's Church that morning had in some manner preceded them. Perhaps the sexton, who had received instructions to open and air the church, had dropped a hint to the first and second grave diggers, who had spread the intelligence. Or perhaps the people simply guessed the truth from the fact of the church being open on a week-day morning that was neither a fast nor a festival.

Be that as it may, a crowd had collected about the church; newsboys, matchgirls, bootblacks, idlers, vagrants and beggars made quite a mob to wait for the bridal party to arrive.

And even the mechanics and laborers that were at work on a block of new buildings that were in course of erection on the opposite side of the street "knocked off" for a few minutes to see the wedding.

The carriage drew up at the church door. The bridegroom alighted and assisted his bride to alight. She was so closely veiled that the crowd could not see her face as she was led through it into the church.

Mrs. Llewellyn got out with the help of her footman, and, as she followed the youthful pair, she threw her eyes superciliously over the "rabble rout" that had gathered to receive her; and in doing so she encountered—the eyes of the strange workman!

He stood there, hod on shoulder, gazing upon her with a sort of idiotic consternation depicted in his blank stare and open mouth.

An icy bolt of terror shot through her heart, and, shivering as with an ague fit, she hurried into the church.

Quite a considerable number of respectable-looking people occupied the back seats and side pews. These

were uninvited wedding guests, or, at best, guests only invited by the sexton.

Mrs. Llewellyn, angered by the crowd outside, terrified by the strange hod-carrier, and annoyed by the people inside, found an opportunity, in coming up behind her son, to whisper fiercely in his ear the questions:

"How is this? Where do all these people come from? Who gave them leave to gather here?"

"Well, mother, I believe when the church doors are open the people that are pew-holders have a right to come in and participate in anything that is going forward. And I, for my part, have no objection. Have you, Cousin Gladys?" inquired the bridegroom.

"Law, no," replied the bride.

"There, now, you see, mother, Gladys has no objection no more than I have. And besides—a marriage should be a public ceremony, not a private one. Let the folks come and see mine, if it does them any good. I told the sexton so."

"Always a fool!" muttered Mrs. Llewellyn to herself.

By this time they had reached the space in front of the altar, at which stood the officiating clergyman, book in hand.

The little party soon arranged itself.

The clergyman opened the book and commenced the ceremony.

The bride was as calm and as cold as the "snow maiden." The bridegroom was a little fidgety, as though troubled by reminiscences of the former marriage ceremony.

Mrs. Llewellyn stood a little in the rear of the party, outwardly composed, but inwardly agitated, and all the while watching through the corner of her eye the crowd that had pushed its way into the aisles of the church, as if she dreaded an interruption from some of them. When the minister reached that critical part of the ceremony which had proved so fatal to her plans on a former occasion, and as he read again the passage: "If any man can show just cause why they may not be joined together let him now speak, or else hereafter forever hold his peace," and while he made the usual pause, she held her breath in a guilty dread.

The pause was not interrupted, however. The bridegroom and his lady mother breathed freely. And the ceremony proceeded prosperously toward its close.

When, however, the right moment came for the bridegroom to place the ring upon the finger of the bride, that transaction required some little shifting of position. And thus it was that, in turning half around to present her ungloved left hand to the bridegroom, the bride stood suddenly face to face with—the hod-carrier!

Magnetized by what he gazed upon, he had unconsciously elbowed his way through the crowd toward the scene of action, and now he stood obtrusively near the actors and face to face with the bride!

As one struck with sudden madness by the sight of the dead raised from the grave, for one supreme moment Gladys stood with ashen cheeks and parted lips and dilated eyes staring at the apparition; and then, with one wild, agonized, unearthly shriek, she cried, "Arthur!" threw up her arms, and fell forward in a deadly swoon.

"So help me Bob, if I didn't know it! I said that fellow would turn up at last!" cried Mr. Stukely, breaking out into schoolboyish expletives more expressive of vexation than alarm as he dived to the floor to lift the fallen bride.

At the same instant the "fellow" to whom Mr. Stukely had alluded slunk away, as if frightened by the effect his presence had produced, and made his escape through the crowd.

By this time all was confusion.

The bridegroom, the minister, and the lady, were all kneeling upon the floor around the swooning bride.

"So help me, Bob, I knew how it was going to be!" said the bridegroom, as he stooped and lifted his twice-lost bride in his arms.

Led on by the sexton, who opened the doors and showed the way, he easily carried her into the vestry-room, where he laid her on the sofa.

Mrs. Llewellyn and the minister followed, and the crowd pressed after them.

But the minister would on no account allow them to pass the threshold of the vestry-room, the door of which he closed upon them.

And so there was no one left in the room with Gladys but her own immediate party.

Mrs. Llewellyn stood at the head of the sofa, bathing the face of the charge with *eau de Cologne*. When the minister approached, she said to him:

"You must have been very much astonished, sir, by the scene you have just witnessed."

"I was, madam," he answered.

"It was—extraordinary!" exclaimed Mr. Stukely.

"It was, sir!" agreed the minister.

"Hold your tongue, James Stukely!" said his mother, in a fierce whisper. Then turning to the minister, she said aloud:

"Now that we are alone, sir, I may inform you that my young friend here has suffered very severe bereavements in the loss of her father, her mother, and a young companion, who was dear to her as a brother. These losses have so affected her mind as to leave her in a very nervous and hysterical condition. This morning, the accidental resemblance of an individual present in the crowd that pressed into the church to witness the marriage, to a deceased young friend of her own, who died under peculiarly distressing circumstances, excited and overwhelmed her, and occasioned this swoon."

The minister bowed and bowed to everything the lady said. But the more she explained, the less he understood.

The bridegroom, meanwhile, stood at the feet of his bride, making himself as passively useful as a table or a stand might do, by holding bottles, glasses, pocket handkerchiefs, fans and everything else that was thrust into his hands, and muttering to himself:

"Extraordinary!"

And then inconsistently enough, breaking out in childish style:

"Blest if I didn't know how it was going to be all the time!"

Sometimes Mrs. Llewellyn caught his eye, and in common parlance, "gave him a look" which would silence him for a few seconds.

At length, as all their efforts to restore Gladys to consciousness proved unavailing, Mrs. Llewellyn looked up from her task and said:

"I think, sir, that I had better take her home, where she can be put to bed and receive medical attendance."

"I think, perhaps, madam, that you are right, if, in her present condition, she can be removed with safety," said the minister, politely and sympathetically.

"Oh, certainly, she can! It will only be necessary to place her in an easy position and to drive very slowly. Is there any one you can be so good as to send, sir, to see if our carriage is waiting?"

"Certainly, madam," said the minister, leaving the room.

In a few minutes he returned, saying:

"The carriage is waiting; but as there is a curious crowd collected around to wait and see the result of this affair, I thought it best to send the sexton to tell the coachman to drive away and come in on the back street and draw up at the vestry back door, which is close at hand, and which will enable you to take the young lady away privately, without your being annoyed by the crowd."

"I thank you very much, indeed, sir! We will take our unfortunate charge at once to the carriage then. James Stukely, lend me your assistance!"

Once more the luckless bridegroom lifted his bride in his arms. The obliging minister walked before and opened the doors; and thus Gladys was borne carefully out of the church and placed tenderly on the cushions of the carriage.

Mrs. Llewellyn thanked the minister for his services, and allowed him to add another item by putting her into her seat.

Mr. Stukely followed his mother, bowed his adieu to the minister and gave the order to the coachman to drive home.

CHAPTER XV.

RESOLUTION.

When Gladys was relieved of her tight-fitting dress and laid at ease back on the pillows in her room, she drew a deep, fluttering breath, opened her eyes and gazed around.

Mrs. Llewellyn, who was anxiously waiting in the room, drew near the bed, stooped over her, and whispered:

"How do you feel, love?"

But the question had scarcely left her false lips ere she shrank back appalled at the awful meaning that shone from those newly-opened eyes.

The thunderbolt that had fallen upon the head of Gladys in the church had scattered the fatal lethargy that held her faculties captive and had flashed into her soul the light of a full intelligence. And in the steady look she fixed upon the face of Mrs. Llewellyn there was terrible accusation, defiance, and danger.

And that bold, bad woman drew back in momentary consternation. She soon rallied her self-command, however, and again approached and bent over her victim, saying, with forced calmness:

"I hope you feel better, my love?"

"Begone!" exclaimed Gladys, in a deep, low, indignant voice.

Mrs. Llewellyn withdrew from the bedside to a little stand near the windows, where she poured out a glass of port wine, which she brought to her charge, saying, honeyly:

"You are excited, my poor child. Drink this; it will do you good."

Gladys stretched out her hand, took the wine glass, and fixing her eyes, now burning black, with half suppressed fury upon the face of the traitress, she answered, sternly:

"Oh, wretch! wretch! lost to every feeling of humanity! to every principle of honor! Look you! this is the way in which I drink your wine and toast your health!

To the destruction of both!" And, so saying, she deliberately turned the glass upside down, and poured its contents upon the carpet.

"Gladys! what do you mean by that? You have ruined this beautiful Brussels! and you have wasted the good wine!" exclaimed Mrs. Llewellyn, in an agitated voice, and veiling her excessive anxiety under a pretense of housewifely care.

"Whether is it better to waste wine, or to waste human life? To ruin a gaudy woollen rag or a human soul! What do I mean by it? I mean something like this!" exclaimed Gladys, tossing the empty glass into the fireplace. "I mean, madam, to take no more of your secretly-administered slow poisons. And in order to avoid doing so, I will henceforth take nothing from your hands."

"Gladys, you are mad! And really, if you go on in this violent and destructive manner you must be subjected to a stricter restraint than ever!" said Mrs. Llewellyn, in a voice of rage and fear, to which she in vain attempted to give a tone of calm expostulation.

"No, Mrs. Jay; I am neither mad nor violent, though I have good grounds for being both! Oh, I know now! I know all! I have been shamefully deceived and drugged into temporary imbecility, if not into absolute idiocy! I have been brought to the very verge of guilt and dishonor. Another hour, and I should have been plunged into crime and ruin!—I, a Llewellyn! But I saw my husband. I saw him in good time. He looked like a workman; and he gazed at me strangely; but I knew him, and I was saved!"

"Gladys, what frenzy is this? Arthur Powis has been dead a year. Can the dead rise?""

"I know not; but in the flesh, or in the spirit, I saw my husband at the church. And I was saved."

"Nonsense! You have been shocked and terrified by the striking likeness of a living man to a dead one. We all know who the fellow was that frightened you so in the church, where he never should have been permitted to come, at least on such an occasion as that of this morning. He is one William Simmons, a stonemason's laborer, who used to work on this very street, and pass the house several times a day."

"He was Arthur Powis. Do you think that the disguise of a workman's dress and a hod could deceive me?"

"Gladys, I will have that man sought for and brought to your presence, to convince you that he is William Simmons, a stonemason's laborer, who has lived and worked in New York for years!" said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"I take you at your word!" cried Gladys, eagerly. "I accept the challenge! Bring him here! Bring him quickly! That I may tell him all, and vindicate myself before him—and go forth with him!"

"Very well, my dear, I will certainly do so. And now, Gladys, love, be reasonable, and take a glass of wine to revive your strength. See, dear, I will bring you the decanter and a clean glass, and you shall pour the wine out for yourself; and so your injurious suspicions may not deprive you of a necessary stimulant," said the lady, as she went to bring the little tray upon which the decanter and glasses stood.

"What!" said Gladys, "at your old tricks again so soon, Mrs. Jay?"

"Gladys! for shame! help yourself to the wine!" said the lady, recoiling, and then offering the tray.

"No, no, Mrs. Jay! I cannot trust you, Mrs. Jay! You may have drugged the whole decanter, for aught that I know! I cannot trust you, Mrs. Jay! I should be an idiot to do so!"

"Gladys! beware! How dare you speak so to me?"

"Madam! do you beware! How dare you ask me such a question, and brave the answer that I can make? Why do I speak to you thus? Why? Because, from the very first moment you entered my father's house at Kader Idris, an honored guest, and a cherished relative, to this moment that you stand here over the wreck of his only daughter, wrecked by your contrivance, you have been guilty of the blackest treachery toward him, your benefactor—toward me, your ward! From the moment you entered that house you resolved to become its mistress. You threw your devilish spells over my father's mind and heart, and over my own. The old man and the young girl were equally unsuspicious of guile! First, no doubt, you designed to become my father's second wife, and rule him and me and our estate from that posi-

tion! But my father's fidelity to the memory of my dear mother was too strong even for your fascinations to undermine!"

"Gladys! be silent! I command you!" interrupted the enraged woman.

"I will not! I am a Llewellyn, and do not understand commands, except those I issue! Finding you could not be my father's wife, you insinuated yourself into his confidence, and became his trusted friend! He could not marry you; but he gave you the greatest proof of confidence a man could give a woman—he made you the sole guardian of his orphan daughter, the sole trustee of her estate! How did you repay his confidence? How did you discharge your duties? First, as soon as my father had made his will, investing you with all this irresponsible power——"

"A power that I still hold," hissed the woman, in a low, deep, threatening voice.

"A power that you still assume, and criminally abuse; but that you no longer legally hold, madam! for whether now I am a wife or widow, since I was married I have ceased to be your ward."

"We shall see that."

"We shall—but you interrupt me, Mrs. Jay. I was about to tell you why I spoke to you in the way you found so objectionable. I say, from the time my dear father made that fatal will, giving you all this power, he sickened with a strange disease. Oh, Heaven of heavens! My dear, lost father. I dare not dwell upon the manner of his death! Mrs. Jay, what was the disease my father died of?"

"Gladys, cease this insane raving, I say!" gasped the woman, turning white as death.

"The doctors, with all their skill, could not discover its nature nor alleviate its pangs. He died. Mrs. Jay, what did he die of?"

"Gladys! cease, cease, I say!" exclaimed the woman, stamping.

"I will not. You asked me for a 'why.' I will give you one, and a 'wherefore' at the back of it. My father died. You best know how. No sooner was he under the sod than you began your machinations against my

peace and honor. You intercepted all the letters between me and my betrothed, and subjected me to a cruel anxiety and suspense that preyed upon my health and spirits for many months. When, in spite of all you could do or say to shake my faith in my dear Arthur, I still trusted him, you produced forged letters purporting to be my father's written commands—dying commands to his child to break off her engagement with Mr. Powis and to wed—whom?—your idiotic son, James Stukely. When, in spite of all this, my betrothed returned to me, and we rejected the forged letters and their false counsel, you, by an act of arbitrary power, made me a prisoner in my own room. When, favored by fortune, I made my escape and gave my hand in marriage to Arthur, you followed us! Like some foul and prowling beast of prey you crept secretly on our track. I saw you on one day. On the next I saw not my husband. What became of him, Mrs. Jay?"

"Girl! I will not be outraged in my own house!"

"You will be outraged in a more public place, madam, before the play is over. What became of Arthur Powis, I ask you? You told me then that he had been assigned to the command of a store ship at the Portsmouth Navy Yard. You deceived those dear old ladies, too, who had me under their protection. I know you did, or they never would have consented to my leaving them under the circumstances. You beguiled me from their protection—beguiled me by the basest falsehood——"

"Ungrateful girl! I drew you gently from a life of dishonor and misery to one of honor and safety under my own protection!" exclaimed Mrs. Llewellyn.

Without heeding her interruption, Gladys continued:

"You sent me, ill, weak, and alone, to a strange seaport, in search of a man who had never been there, and a ship that had no existence. You followed me where you had first sent me. You found me in the condition that you had worked to produce. Deceived, baffled, and half distracted, I was wandering about the Portsmouth Navy Yard in search of the husband you had sent me to seek, when you arrested me as your mad ward!"

"You were mad!"

"No! never! weakened, subdued, palsied as I have

been, I have never for an instant been mad! To resume, madam! for you shall hear all the 'why!' You could not have taken me away from those kindly old ladies except by fraud; but you could seize me in the streets of Portsmouth by force—that was what you worked for! You did so! You got me in your power; you dosed, drugged, slowly poisoned me; you took me to Kader Idris; shut me out from all my kind; degraded me to your infamous will; and you would have consummated your criminal purpose in marrying me to your imbecile son, but for the intervention of an humble agent—my poor lost mother's maid and my own nurse, who discovered your nefarious practices and warned me—yes! and saved me then. But you suspected her, and consequently—she disappeared! as all disappear who are in your way, Mrs. Jay. I missed her one morning, and never saw her more! What became of Ailie, Mrs. Jay?"

Again the pallor of death spread over the face of Mrs. Llewellyn; but she soon rallied her flying courage, and answered haughtily:

"You insolent girl, how dare you ask me? When a servant offends me I get rid of her."

"I know you do, Mrs. Jay. But—will you get rid of retributive justice as easily? Well, my only remaining, humble friend removed from me, I made but a feeble stand against your devilish power. My situation, too, made me an easy prey. I became a mother, and had to send my child away to save her from your fell plots. Alas! did I save her? Heaven knows! Again you dosed, drugged, slowly poisoned me. Again you degraded me to your own infamous will. And this time certainly you would have effected your felonious purpose, and married me to your foolish son, but for the intervention of Providence. I saw my husband in the church and I was saved!"

"Base, shameful, thankless girl! I rescued you from a life of dishonor; for the adventurer I have permitted you to call your husband never was so in reality. All that I did for you was legally as well as humanely done; for not being a wife, but a minor, you were still my ward, owing me obedience. I had still the authority of a guardian over you—an authority that I used only for

your best interests. I would have married you to my only son, a youth of spotless moral character, and thus restored you to honor and peace, but that you were frightened by a chance resemblance of a living man to a dead one. And now, when I would soothe your agitation and support your weakness, you turn on me like a tigress, upraid me with crimes that have no existence but in your own injurious suspicions. But, Gladys! for the love I bear the memory of your dear parents, I will bear with you yet," said the woman, with a fair show of moderation.

"Oh, hypocrite!" said Gladys, giving her a withering look.

"Take care, young lady! Remember that you are still a minor and my ward. Still under my authority, and in my power!" said the lady.

"I am not afraid of you, Mrs. Jay! You have done the very worst to me that you can do! Yes; you can do no worse, even though you were to kill me. By your infamous practices upon my nervous system you deprived me of my moral and intellectual free agency and drew me to the brink of crime and ruin. Can you do more to me than that? No! for if you were to kill me, you could only destroy the life of my body; whereas, by your late horrible treatment, you essayed the destruction of my intellect and will, which are parts of the soul! Can you ever do as much as that to me again? No; for hear me, Mrs. Jay, you will never have the opportunity! For from your hand I will never take anything whatever to eat or drink! And while I stay in your house I will never take anything to eat or to drink that may by any means be made the vehicle of your soul-destroying drugs. Sooner than do so I will starve myself to death. Yes, Mrs. Jay, I have the spirit to dare death, even the slow and painful death of starvation! but I have not the will to become again the passive, senseless, degraded tool of crime that you would have made me! Perhaps Providence may send me deliverance. I shall pray for it. In the meantime, my part is to preserve the purity of my intellect and will, even, if necessary, at the cost of suffering and death. And so, while I stay with you, neither food nor drink, that can possibly be made the medium

of poison, shall pass my lips, though I famish!" said Gladys, closing those pallid lips with the sad firmness of a young martyr.

"You will find that it requires more than courage to starve yourself to death. It requires fortitude!" said the lady, vindictively.

But Gladys had "said her say," and made no reply.

"I suppose I must bear with you in your present mood. But do not carry your madness too far, my girl! Remember, there are such things as asylums, where the frenzy of lunatics is restrained, and where the world seldom troubles itself to inquire about them," said Mrs. Llewellyn, turning away.

In doing so her glances fell upon Ennis, who had been forgotten until this moment. Ennis, who had remained in the room through the whole interview, and though only half in the confidence of Mrs. Llewellyn, had stood apart with open eyes and ears, watching the speakers and drinking in every word of the conversation.

"Why are you loitering here?" curtly demanded her mistress.

"If you please, ma'am, you never told me to go," said the girl.

"I tell you now, then!" exclaimed the lady.

And Ennis left the room.

Mrs. Llewellyn soon followed, locking the door after her.

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. STUKELY ASSERTS HIMSELF.

Passing down to the next floor, Mrs. Llewellyn saw Mr. Stukely in his room, busily engaged in packing his traveling trunk.

"What now?" inquired his mother, looking in.

"I am going back to the University. I am not going to stay here to be made a laughing-stock of!"

"What! will you forsake Gladys in her present state of health?" demanded the lady.

"Oh, bosh! about her state of health! She's well

enough. She's only a-doing of me, that's all! And she shan't make a fool of me again! not if I know it! Nor call me an idiot a third time neither," said Mr. Stukely, cramming his wedding coat into the middle of his trunk.

"James Stukely, what do you mean?"

"I mean to go back to college, and I mean to start by the night train. Law, mother, I'm not so anxious to marry Cousin Gladys! It was only to please you and her that I ever consented. Catch me consenting again, that's all! But I thought as long as she was dying in love with me, and you was anxious for it, I'd do the handsome thing, and I did it! But Lord, as for me, I don't think Cousin Gladys can hold a candle to Nelly Blythe."

"To whom?" cried Mrs. Llewellyn, in alarm.

"To Nelly Blythe, the young lady that makes my shirts at college. If you could only once see her, mother, you would—— My goodness, what's the matter?" cried Mr. Stukely, for Mrs. Llewellyn, before she had heard his sentence half out, had dropped breathless into the nearest chair.

"James Stukely, do you mean to kill me?" she cried, almost hysterically.

"No! what made you think so? I wouldn't hurt a hair of your head, nor let anybody else do it! I was going to tell you something that I thought would please you."

"What was it, then?" inquired the lady in a faint voice, with some feeling of relief and some of curiosity.

"Why, seeing you want me married so badly, I was just going to tell you what a nice girl Nelly Blythe was, and how I could go down there and marry her to-morrow, if I like, and—— Now! what's the matter?" he broke off and exclaimed in consternation, for Mrs. Llewellyn, with a cry between a howl and a shriek, had clapped her hands to her head.

"I shall go mad!" she exclaimed.

"Extraordinary! What for? What have I done? There's no pleasing you, mother!" said Mr. Stukely, dropping himself down in a corresponding chair.

Mrs. Llewellyn groaned in real anguish of spirit.

Mr. Stukely sat staring at her, pulling his yellow mustache and sighing:

"Extraordinary!"

Suddenly she started up, rushed at him, seized his arm, and shrieked in his ear:

"James Stukely! If you do make a low marriage, I shall—hang myself!" and so saying she flung off his arm.

Mr. Stukely's chin fell, his eyebrows rose, his eyes started, and his cheeks blanched with horror.

"Extraordinary!—extraordinary!—extraordinary!" he exclaimed as fast as he could speak. Then, finding more definite words, he stammered:

"I—I—I won't do it, mother, if you don't like it! It was all—all—all to please you! I thought you wanted me married and settled; and if Cousin Gladys wouldn't have me I knew the young lady that made my shirts, Miss Nelly Blythe——"

"Don't name her, lest I do something desperate!" cried Mrs. Llewellyn, stamping.

"Well, I won't! I won't! I won't! Only, for goodness gracious sake, mother, don't talk about doing anything desperate, especially hanging, the very idea of which gives me a sort of choking in the throat, and fullness in the head! But tell me what will please you, mother, and I'll do it."

"James Stukely, unpack that trunk and remain quietly where you are, until I settle where we shall go next. Will you do this?" she sharply demanded.

"Yes, yes, yes, mother, I'll do anything. Goodness knows it was all to please you! I'd do anything to please you except it was something I considered very wrong, like marrying a girl on the sly, or taking another man's sweetheart, or something," said Mr. Stukely, beginning to unpack as fast as he could.

With this little victory, which she knew might be turned into defeat in another hour, Mrs. Llewellyn was forced to be contented.

Gladys kept her word. As her fainting fit involved no consequent illness, she soon left her bed. But she did not resume her recent childish amusements. She never now noticed the bright pictures on the walls, nor the Dresden china images, nor the stuffed birds. She never even looked at the lifelike wax doll-baby. And even when Ennis brought it to her and asked her if she would not take it, she blushed faintly, shook her head, and said:

"All that is past now, Ennis; I have come to myself; take the poor toy away."

When her dinner was brought, she turned away her head and utterly refused it.

"Very well," said Mrs. Llewellyn, when she heard of it—"very well! after she has fasted a few hours she will return to her food."

But Mrs. Llewellyn miscalculated the strength of will possessed by Gladys. At tea time she refused her tea and toast.

"Exactly," said Mrs. Llewellyn. "She may be able to dispense with her dinner and tea, but she will not be able to resist breakfast to-morrow morning."

The morning came, however, and Gladys sent away her coffee and rolls untasted. Twenty-four hours' fast already affected her health and strength, and she looked pale and moved languidly. The second day of abstinence passed. On the morning of the third Gladys looked quite haggard; but still she rejected the fragrant coffee, and delicate rolls, and luscious broiled partridge that were placed before her, to tempt her famished appetite.

"Leave it in the room until dinner time," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

And her orders were obeyed; but without effect; for the breakfast stood upon the little table untouched until it was replaced by the dinner; which also remained untouched until it was replaced by the supper; and so passed the third day of this black fast with the captive, who chose to famish in the sight of food rather than risk being drugged to her ruin.

On the morning of the fifth day Gladys could not rise from her bed unassisted. And when once she had slipped on her morning wrapper and sank into her easy chair, it seemed as if she would never be able to leave it again.

Ennis went and reported the condition of her charge to Mrs Llewellyn, who came to see her, and gazed piteously and even angrily upon her wasted face, and hollow cheeks, and sunken eyes.

"So, this is starvation," said Mrs. Llewellyn, with cold cruelty. "It is an interesting case. I never saw one of any sort before. And I never heard of a case of voluntary

starvation; though I believe there have been instances of compulsory famishing."

Gladys neither replied nor looked up at her tormentor. She remained reclining back in her chair, with her thin hands hanging down, and her blue, pale eyelids drooping.

Mrs. Llewellyn stooped, and examined her more closely, saying:

"There are dark circles around the eyes; and shadowy hollows in the temples and cheeks; and the lips are blue and dry and drawn away from the teeth. Interesting process this of starvation, especially when it is entirely voluntary on the part of the subject!"

To these cruel taunts Gladys still vouchsafed no reply.

Then Mrs. Llewellyn spoke more to the purpose:

"See here, Gladys! I have given you time to get over your folly—as much time as was safe—more, perhaps—and now, if you do not take food, I shall force it upon you. Will you take it?"

"No," said the victim, without raising her eyes or moving a muscle.

"Ennis, bring me that cup of coffee, and stand ready to help me."

Ennis obeyed; and Mrs. Llewellyn arose and went close to Gladys.

But Gladys raised one of her wan hands, and in a faint voice said:

"Keep off, madam, and listen to me: You think that you can force food upon me as you could force physic upon a child. But you forget that when a child is gagged, and physic forced into its mouth, it swallows only to avoid suffocation. Now gag me and force food into my mouth, if you dare; and I will suffocate sooner than swallow. Try it. It will be for me only a quicker and easier death than that of starvation; and for you—only one more murder added to your list of crimes."

"You are the devil!" said the woman, drawing back.

"I am a Llewellyn!" said Gladys, proudly; "and I know how to suffer and to die, too, in a good cause."

"You are a lunatic! But I must find some means of making you take food. You shall not commit suicide, either slowly or suddenly, while you are under my care."

"Mrs. Llewellyn, you know that my object is not to

destroy life, but to save honor. I do not refuse food, but I refuse the drugs that are administered through it. While you sit here, let Ennis go out and bring me some oysters in the shell, and bring them here, and open them in my presence, and I will eat them from the shell, free from the suspicion of drugs. If you really wish to save my life, and I think you do—not from motives of humanity, but from those of self-interest, since my death at this time could bring you nothing but disappointment—you will do as I suggest," said Gladys, calmly.

Now, of course, Mrs. Llewellyn did wish to preserve the life of her ward, since that ward was her only hold upon the rich manor and rent-roll of Kader Idris. So she turned to her attendant and said:

"Ennis, your young lady is insane, of course. But it is sometimes judicious, as well as merciful, to humor the fancies of insane people. Go, therefore, and bring the oysters, as she requests. Take this purse."

"Thank goodness, she will eat something at last!" muttered Ennis, whose sympathies were more easily aroused by a famishing stomach than by a breaking heart. And she hurried gladly away upon her errand.

"If it were not that I know your own self-interest is the best guardian of my feeble life, I should dislike being left alone with you, Mrs. Jay," said Gladys.

"You will repent these insults some day," replied the woman.

And these were the only words that passed between the jailer and her prisoner until the return of Ennis.

"Mr. Stukely is downstairs inquiring for you, ma'am," said the girl, as she entered with a covered basket.

Mrs. Llewellyn immediately arose, and left the room.

Ennis almost rushed to the hearth, dropped on her knees, wrenched open an oyster, cut it loose, and handed it up to Gladys.

As the poor famished girl seized and swallowed the grateful morsel, Ennis drew from the basket a bottle of wine, a corkscrew, and a glass, saying:

"I don't know as I did right, Miss Gladys, but here is a bottle of old port, as I made bold to buy. Now look at it, please, ma'am, and see for yourself it is all right, before I draw the cork, so that you may know as nothing

has been put into this. See, ma'am, here is the seal unbroken, and the cobwebs and dust over it all right, as it came from the rest'rant, where I got the oysters."

"Thank you, thank you, oh, thank you, Ennis! This is all the more pleasing to me from being an unexpected kindness. And some day I will reward you for it," said poor Gladys, fervently.

"I don't know as I want any reward. Only don't tell missus," said Ennis, as she drew the cork and poured out a little wine.

When she had given this, she opened another oyster. And then she took from the basket some hard biscuits, which she pressed upon Gladys with assurances that they were all right, having passed from the hands of the vendor into her own.

Again Gladys thanked her new-found friend, as she received the biscuits.

Gladys made a very, very moderate meal, for her stomach, weakened by her severe fast, would not bear much. But as the food was, perhaps, the very best that could be selected for one in her condition, it did her the greatest good.

And after eating she reclined back in her chair, and sank into a healthful sleep.

Ennis hid the wine and biscuits, cleared away the oyster shells, and restored everything to order before Mrs. Llewellyn returned to the room.

Gladys slept long and well, and awakened quite refreshed.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ESCAPE.

In proportion as Gladys recovered from the effects of the drugs that had been administered to her, she grew more keenly intelligent upon the subject of her situation, and more painfully sensitive to its sufferings.

From the morning upon which she had seen that mysterious workman in the church she cherished a hope that he would reappear and prove to be Arthur Powis.

But as day followed day without bringing to pass any such event, her suspense became agonizing.

Mrs. Llewellyn did not keep her promise of finding out that workman and bringing him to the presence of Gladys to convince her of her mistake; nor did she seek to account for the non-fulfillment of that promise. At this period she evaded inquiry by avoiding the presence of her captive.

When Gladys could bear the agony of uncertainty no longer, she called Ennis to her presence and said:

"Ennis, you offered me your services a few days ago. I accept them now. Oh, Ennis! tell me if you have ever seen that man who bears so strong a resemblance to my husband—so strong a resemblance, Ennis, that I cannot help believing him to be Lieutenant Powis himself—although Mrs. Jay declares him to be only a workman. Say, have you seen him, Ennis?"

"Yes, ma'am, but not lately; not for more than a fortnight; but I have seen him close, and know he is only a workman and not Master Arthur," replied the girl, confidently.

"You know this, Ennis? How should you know it?" inquired Gladys, with surprise and distrust.

"Because, ma'am, I found out all about him. For when missus first saw him pass the house and noticed of him, she was troubled by his likeness to Master Arthur, too."

"Oh! she was?"

"Yes, ma'am; and she sent me to ask about him on the sly; and I found out everything."

"What did you find out?"

"I had better begin and tell you all about it, straight through," said the girl.

"Do so, Ennis," answered the young lady.

And Ennis told the whole story of her researches into the life of William Simmons, the stonemason's laborer. At the end of the narrative Gladys said:

"I think you have told me the truth, as far as you know it; but, Ennis, I am less convinced and more dissatisfied than ever. You have lost all traces of him, you say?"

"Yes, ma'am—ever since that Saturday night."

"Well, then, Ennis, I wish you to do something for me, if you can do it without getting yourself into trouble."

"What is it, ma'am?"

"I wish you to go to that street where we went on Tuesday, and to a block of half-finished buildings opposite the church where I was to have been married, and inquire among the workmen there for the man named William Simmons. And, if possible, get speech of the man. You will then find out for a certainty whether he is really whom I suspect him to be. If he is, give him this letter, Ennis, and it will bring him to my side in an hour. And, Ennis, you shall be rewarded for this good service beyond your utmost hopes. Can you do this?"

"Yes, ma'am, for I have got to go up in that very part of the town on a message for my missus."

In an hour from this time the girl went on her double errand.

Gladys passed the interval of her absence in the most intolerable suspense.

It was near sunset when Ennis returned to the house; and it was quite sunset before she got leisure to come to Gladys' room.

"Well! well!" breathlessly gasped Gladys, as the girl opened the door.

"Well, ma'am, here is your letter," answered Ennis, very gravely.

"You did not see him—or—you found him to be not whom I hoped?"

"I did not see him; he—he——"

"What? what?"

"Well, he wasn't Master Arthur Powis, ma'am; so I hope you won't be very much shocked when you hear it; but—but——"

"But—oh, what? Speak, Ennis, for Heaven's sake!" exclaimed Gladys, extremely alarmed by the manner of the girl.

"Well, ma'am, indeed, it is nothing to disturb you, seeing he wasn't Mr. Arthur Powis, although it do seem very dreadful to happen to any one——"

"Oh, Ennis! can't you tell me what it is that has happened?" cried Gladys, clasping her hands.

"Well, ma'am—but, please, don't take on, because, indeed, he was truly nothing but a workman. Well, so, when I went there and asked about him, the other men all looked troubled, and looked at one another, and didn't answer."

The girl paused.

Gladys said not a word, but her clasped hands and imploring eyes were more eloquent than words, in entreaty for her attendant to go on.

"Then," continued Ennis, "the boss came and asked me if I was anything to the young man. And I told him no, nothing at all, only we had used to see him go by, and hadn't seen him lately. Oh, then he looked more confident, and he told me—he told me that,—oh, ma'am don't be shocked——"

"Ennis, Ennis, go on!"

"He told me that the very same day of the marriage that was to be, on last Tuesday afternoon, Billy Simmons——"

"Yes, yes!" The clasped hands began to writhe and twist, and the imploring eyes to start and dilate.

"Oh, ma'am! don't look that-a-way, or I shall never dare to tell you."

"Tell me, or you will kill me!"

"Billy Simmons was at work on a scaffolding up before the third story, and he made a misstep and—oh! remember he wasn't Master Arthur, indeed he wasn't—he fell to the ground and was instantly killed!"

"Oh, Ennis!"

And Gladys sunk back in her chair and covered her face with her hands.

"He wasn't anybody but Billy Simmons, indeed he wasn't, Miss Glad—I mean Mrs. Powis."

Gladys did not reply, nor remove her hands.

"I found that out to a dead certainty; because when I asked where they had buried him, they told me that he was took home to his mother, who was a widow woman, and buried from her house; but they didn't know where. And no more didn't they know where he lived. But, Miss Gladys, it all proves that he couldn't have been Master Arthur, as he was so well known to be what he was."

It was then that Gladys resolved to make a full confidant of Ennis, in the hope of securing her aid.

So she commenced and related the oft-repeated history of her wrongs and sorrows—her parents' death, her lover's absence, her guardian's treachery, and then her imprisonment, her escape, her marriage, and her recapture.

"You know all the rest, Ennis," she said, "for when I was taken to Kader Idris I found you there."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Now, Ennis, the question is, Will you help me to escape from this cruel captivity, in which I am exposed to such constant danger? I do not wish to bribe you, Ennis. Heaven knows I would not willingly bribe any one's servant, even in my extremity. But I do not consider you Mrs. Llewellyn's servant, but mine. I know that what I wish you to do is right. But I also know that by doing it you will risk or lose Mrs. Llewellyn's favor. Therefore, Ennis, I tell you, not in bribery, but in justice, that I will well remunerate your services—so well that you shall never regret Mrs. Llewellyn."

Poor Gladys looked pleadingly up to the face of her keeper, who cast her eyes thoughtfully on the floor.

"Will you assist me to escape, Ennis?"

"Tell me right out what you want me to do, ma'am, and then, if I can't do it, at least I can hold my tongue and not tell Mrs. Llewellyn," said Ennis.

Gladys sighed, and then said:

"I wish you to do simply this: In the dead of night—say, this night or to-morrow night, or any other that we may fix upon—I wish you just to open the doors and let me out!"

"Oh, ma'am, you would be insulted, or robbed, or murdered, or something, in this wicked city."

"No, for you must have a cab waiting for me around the corner."

"Where would you go, ma'am?"

"Straight to the Washington railway station, and sit in the cab until the office should be opened, and then I would take a ticket for the early train South, and be half way to Washington before my cruel enemy should have discovered my absence. Will you do this for me, Ennis?"

"Oh, ma'am, if I was, and if my missus was to find it

out, she would turn me out of doors neck and heels!" said the girl, with a half willing and half frightened look.

"I know she would, Ennis, and, therefore, I propose to pay you liberally. Ennis, I have saved up fifteen hundred dollars from my allowance of pocket money, because, in truth, for the last year I have had few opportunities of spending money. I will give you five hundred dollars as a guarantee against any loss you may suffer through serving me."

The eyes of Ennis expanded with surprise and brightened with pleasure.

Gladys saw this, and went on to say:

"Nor is that all, Ennis, nor a tithe of what I will do to reward you for helping me to regain my liberty. In very little more than a year from this I shall be of age. I shall then be the mistress of Kader Idris and all its vast dependencies, with one of the largest private revenues in the whole country. I will then take you into my service at double your present wages, or I will pay you down a thousand dollars as a marriage dower if you wish to marry, or capital to begin business upon if you wish to keep a shop. Will you assist me, Ennis?"

"Yes, ma'am, I will; but I dar'n't stop back here and face missus after all's done. She'd murder me. Can't you take me along with you, ma'am?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, Ennis, gladly!" exclaimed her young mistress, catching eagerly at the idea.

"I have got to go down and get my supper now, ma'am, if you please, because missus is awful particular about hours in the kitchen."

"I know she is. Very well, Ennis. After supper, come up again, and we will talk further of this."

That night, when all the rest of the household were gone to bed, Gladys and her attendant sat arranging their plans for flight. Ennis begged to stipulate for a day or two to smuggle her own wardrobe out of the house and into the care of an acquaintance she had picked up in the neighborhood, and Gladys unwillingly consented to the delay. For herself, she had but little to take away, as far as bulk was concerned; her money and jewels, a comb and brush and a single change of clothes were all that she required for her journey. These were easily packed in a

small leather bag that she herself could carry in her hand. The escape was arranged to take place on the Friday night following, thus allowing Ennis three whole days to prepare. Having settled this, Ennis arose and courtesied, and bade her mistress a respectful good-night.

So intent had Gladys been upon the one point of her escape from the house that she had not cast a glance at anything beyond that. She had at once resolved to go to Washington, because she knew Washington better than any other place, and also because she had vague hopes that her friends, the three old maiden sisters, would protect her, and perhaps help her to prove her marriage and secure her liberty, and that they might even possibly be able to give her some information about Arthur. She resolved, then, on going to Washington, to go at once to "Ceres Cottage," or, as the poor old ladies called it, "Serious Cottage," and throw herself upon their protection. She did not deem it necessary, however, to confide this part of her plan to her servant.

The interval between this day, Monday, and the day of flight, Friday, was passed by Gladys in the usual dull routine of her restricted life.

Even her preparations for the journey afforded but little variety, for they occupied less than half an hour.

Friday came—a splendid autumn day, a very herald of freedom and happiness. But it seemed very, very long to Gladys. At last it ended, and Gladys retired.

Of course, sleep was out of the question, but she lay there resting and listening to the household pacing about on their last rounds before retiring to sleep.

Ennis came up from her supper at ten o'clock, lowered the gas, and seated herself beside her mistress, to watch out the long hours before two o'clock.

At precisely a quarter to two they turned off the gas, stole from the room, locked the door, taking the key with them, and glided softly down the stairs.

They gained the street door, passed it safely and locked it after them, taking the key with them, as Ennis said:

"It won't do for us to leave the house open, for if it should be robbed to-night, they would be sure to think it was me as robbed it, seeing I have run away."

Gladys agreed with her.

They walked briskly on to the corner of the street where the cab was waiting.

The driver jumped down and opened the door.

Ennis respectfully helped her young mistress to enter, and then followed her in and took the front seat before her.

The driver received his orders, and the cab started at a brisk rate for the Washington railway station.

It was three o'clock when they arrived there. They got out, and Ennis paid and dismissed the cab, and conducted her mistress into the waiting-room.

The ticket office was not open, and they had two good hours to wait in the deserted room before it would be open. These hours were passed by Ennis in nodding over the rusty stove, and by her mistress in watching the sleepy porters and in waiting for the office to open.

It was open at five o'clock. Ennis at once took tickets, got the baggage checked, and then "convoyed" her young mistress on board the ferryboat.

At six o'clock they were seated in the cars, flying southward. And the rising sun found them far on their way toward Philadelphia.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FUGITIVE'S SHELTER.

Gladys arrived in Washington at an early hour of the afternoon. She took a hack at once, and accompanied by Ennis, drove out to Ceres Cottage. The sun was setting as the carriage drew up at the rustic gate.

How welcome, how peaceful, how pleasant the old house looked! Yes, even pleasant, although it stood among its bare trees, whose fallen leaves strewed all the garden paths.

Gladys alighted at the gate and paid and dismissed the carriage, and, followed by Ennis, walked up the straight leaf-strewn garden path that led to the door. A ruddy, leaping and glimmering light, like that emitted by the blazing of a wood fire, shone through the windows of

the sitting-room on the right-hand side of the front door, and added cheerfulness to the aspect of the scene.

Gladys knocked—with her fist, for you remember that there was neither knocker nor bell at this rustice entrance, and while she paused for a response, she distinctly heard Miss Polly Crane exclaim, in a scared whisper:

"Lor! who is that? Go to the door, Harriet, but be sure to ask who is there before you unlock it."

And the next moment Gladys heard the woman cautiously approach and demand:

"Who dar?"

"It is I, Harriet."

"Who I?"

"Why, Harriet, don't you know my voice? I am Mrs. Powis, who used to lodge here about a year ago."

"Lor, Mrs. Powers, ma'am!" And down went the bar and back went the bolt and the key was turned in a trice, and there in the open door stood Harriet, glowing with welcome!

"Lor, chile! Come in out'n de cold, honey! When did you arrive? Who dat wid you? Your waiting maid? Come in, gal!—Lor, Miss Polly, if here ain't Mrs. Powers! Come in, chilun!" exclaimed Harriet, hustling her questions and ejaculations one upon the back of another, as she closed the door and bustled Gladys and her maid into the bright old sitting-room.

The three old ladies who were sitting around the fire arose in a body, exclaiming simultaneously:

"Lor! Mrs. Colonel Pollard, my dear, to think of seeing you here!"

"I hope you are as glad to see me as I am to come," said Gladys, faintly smiling.

"Oh, yes, indeed," replied the three old ladies together, as Miss Polly placed a chair and made the visitor sit down, and Miss Milly untied and removed her bonnet, and Miss Jenny stirred the fire into a blaze.

But Gladys saw that they were all three "dying" of curiosity to know what brought her, how far she had come, and how long she meant to stay.

"Harriet, bring a candle in here directly—two candles, Harriet! and then put the kettle on and fry that chicken,

and make some nice rice waffles—Mrs. Colonel Pollard always relished rice waffles—and then come and set the table for tea. You'll stay to tea, my dear, I hope?" said Miss Polly.

"Yes, dear Miss Polly, I will stay to tea, and I will stay to sleep, too, if you will let me," replied Gladys.

"To sleep! Here, Harriet! stop a minute. Now, listen—the very first thing you do before you put the kettle on, you go and make a good fire in Mrs. Colonel Pollard's room, to air it well. And then go and do the rest I told you," said Miss Polly, anxiously.

When Harriet had left the room, the three sisters turned kindly, questioning glances upon Gladys.

"Dear Miss Polly, and dear good friends! I want to stay with you altogether, if you will let me! You will let me, will you not?" inquired the poor, hunted child, in a pleading, tearful tone.

The three old ladies did not reply—not from unwillingness to grant her request, but from amazement that it should have been made.

"You will let me stay, will you not? I shall not be a trouble or an expense to you. I will wait on myself, indeed I will! And I should say that I am able to pay you well—as I certainly will do if I stay; only I know that would be the very last consideration with you. Will you let me stay?" pleaded Gladys, anxiously, earnestly, tearfully.

"Why, laws, yes, to be sure, we will, honey," said Miss Polly. And both her sisters chimed in and agreed with her.

"Surely, you are as welcome as flowers in May. It wasn't no doubt about nothing of that sort as was on our minds, only we was a wondering why—why——"

"Why I wished to stop at all?" smiled Gladys. And oh! how faint and sad her smile was.

"Yes, honey, not to deceive you, we was."

"Well, my dear Miss Polly, I will tell you all about it to-morrow. It is such a long, dark, sinful story! And I am so tired to-night," pleaded Gladys.

"Well, honey, you shan't be bothered to-night. And so you shan't. Soon as ever your room is aired and you get

your tea you shall go to bed. Is this young 'oman your maidservant?"

"Yes."

"Is—she—white or black?" inquired Miss Polly, in a whisper, as she peered from the corner of her eye at the pretty Ennis.

"She is a quadroon, which, I believe, is three-quarters white and one black," answered Gladys, in a low tone.

"Slave or free?" whispered Miss Polly.

"Free."

"Is she to stay with you?"

"If you can accommodate her, she will remain with me until she can procure another service."

"Oh, she can stay as long as you like, for that matter, Mrs. Colonel Pollard."

While Miss Polly and Gladys were still talking, Harriet came in and set the table for tea, which was soon served.

After tea Miss Polly took up a candle to show Gladys to her room.

"But, honey, where is your luggidge?" she inquired, as they passed through the front passage, and she looked about her in the expectation of seeing boxes and trunks.

"We have all that we require there," said Gladys, pointing to two well-stuffed carpetbags that Ennis was bringing after them.

Gladys found a cheerful wood fire in the open fireplace and a clean, well-aired bed waiting to receive her. And there was a neat and comfortable pallet prepared for Ennis in a warm corner.

Miss Polly bade her young guest a loving good-night, and left her to repose.

Left alone, Gladys knelt down and thanked Heaven for bringing her safely through her perilous flight to this home of peace. And then she went to bed and fell asleep. And Ennis followed her example.

The next morning, after breakfast, when Gladys was sitting alone with the three sisters beside their bright fire and well-swept hearth, she told them the oft-repeated story of her wrongs.

The sisters listened, and wept, and wondered.

"Well, my heart always did misgive me that she was a bad one," said Miss Polly, beginning to snivel.

And then, notwithstanding the nods, and winks, and headshakings of her two sisters, who did not seem to approve of the confession, she made a clean breast of it, and told Gladys of the wicked part that she, Miss Crane, had been beguiled into playing, when she aided and abetted Mrs. Jay in her abduction of the young wife of Arthur Powis.

"But, oh, my dear, she was such a fair-spoken woman, and she persuaded me as it was all for your good! But for all that, I do believe in the bottom of my heart I always did misdoubt her—only I had no reasons to go upon! and so I didn't dare to say nothing agin her. But, anyway, it a'most killed me! After you went away I was that uneasy about you, you can't think! I writ, and writ, and writ to Mrs. James Lewis to ask after you, and I directed the letters so particular to Katy Idyls, and I waited, and waited, and waited; but I never got no answer to none of them. And, oh! to think all that time that she was treating you so! And now, honey, what are you going to do?"

"I am going to put advertisements in all the papers calling on Arthur Powis to answer; and offering rewards to any one who can give authentic intelligence of him. That is all that I can do at present. For, unless I find Arthur, I cannot shake Mrs. Llewellyn in her position as my guardian before the expiration of my minority."

"Yes, honey, I think that is very prudent. And if I can help you anyways I'll do it. But that wasn't exactly what I meant when I axed you what you was a-going to do. I meant what you was a-going to do about me. Was you a-going to forgive me, or what?" whimpered Miss Polly.

"Forgive you! Dear, dearest old friend—what a word to come from your venerable lips! Forgive you! Why, I know that you love me, and that you did everything for the very best."

"Well, then, and so you do forgive me?" whimpered Miss Polly.

"Forgive you! Why, dearest, best old friend, I thank you—I thank you for all your loving kindness, from first to last, to a poor, motherless and fatherless girl," said Gladys, holding out her hand.

Miss Polly seized it, and covered it with kisses and tears, as she sobbed out the words:

"If this ain't a-heaping of co-coals of fif-fire on my hea-head, I don't know what is."

Gladys kissed her, and went upstairs to put on her bonnet and shawl. She was going out to begin that very day the work of finding Arthur.

When she was quite ready to start, she looked into her purse to see whether she had money enough to pay for the advertisements. She found but five dollars in change. Thinking this sum insufficient, she went to the carpet-bag in which she had deposited the roll of bank notes which formed the bulk of her available funds. She slipped her hand to the bottom of the bag, but failed to find the parcel of which she was in search. She then took out all the contents of the bag, but the parcel was not among them. Next she searched the other carpet-bag, but with no better success. Then she looked about the room, but in vain. Still she felt no misgivings on the subject. The parcel was somewhere in the room, she thought. So she rang for Ennis.

The girl came running up the stairs.

"Ennis," said her mistress, "what have you done with that roll of bank notes that was in the bottom of this carpetbag?"

"I haven't done anything with it, ma'am," replied the girl.

"What! didn't you unpack it from the bag and put it away somewhere?"

"No, indeed, ma'am. I never opened that bag. Everything that we wanted for the night was in the other bag."

"I know that; but you must have put away that money somewhere and forgotten all about it. Try to remember."

Ennis assumed a cogitating expression of countenance and seemed to "try to remember," not, however, with the faintest hope of recollecting anything to the purpose, but in deference to the directions of her mistress. Nothing came of it, however; so, after a few moments, Ennis lifted her head, and, looking her questioner honestly in the face, she answered:

"It is no use, ma'am; I can't remember what I never

did, for indeed and indeed I never touched that roll of money."

Gladys looked in her eyes, and saw that she spoke the truth. And for the first time since missing the money Gladys became seriously uneasy.

"Help me to look for it, then, Ennis. It must be about here somewhere, you know."

They commenced the search. They looked through both carpetbags again. They shook out all the clothes. Then they looked into the bureau drawers, on the dressing-table, in the wardrobe, about the bed; in short, they looked into every probable, possible, and impossible place; and all to no purpose—the money could not be found.

Finally they looked into each other's faces in the utmost dismay.

"Has anybody been in the room besides yourself, Ennis?" inquired Gladys.

"Yes, ma'am; Harriet, the housewoman, has been here to help me make the bed."

"Call her."

Ennis went downstairs to summon Harriet, and returned not only with Harriet, but with the three Miss Cranes, who, having heard of the missing money, came up full of consternation.

Harriet, being questioned, declared that she had not touched the carpetbags, nor seen the money. And the truth and honesty of Harriet was beyond dispute.

"I must have lost the money on the train, then; though how I could have done so passes my comprehension," said Gladys.

"How much was it, honey?" inquired, Miss Polly, sympathetically.

"Fifteen hundred dollars!" said Gladys, with a sigh.

Miss Polly started as if she had been shot, reeled backward, and dropped into the nearest chair, gasping breathlessly:

"Fifteen hundred dollars!" It was an inconceivable sum! The loss of it must break half a dozen banks, and cause a panic in the money market! Miss Polly had her own small savings stored up in the "American Bank." "I wonder if it will hold out, or whether I hadn't better draw my money," she said. And then she covered her

head with her apron, and burst into tears, sobbing: "Fif--teen hun—dred dol—lars!"

"Don't cry, Miss Polly," said Gladys, totally missing the point of her grief. "Don't cry. After all, the loss of this money is only a temporary inconvenience to me. In little more than a year, which will soon pass away, I shall come into the possession of Kader Idris and its vast revenues, when the question of a thousand dollars more or less will be a mere trifle. Believe me, I shall not let it trouble me. The only difference will be that, instead of leading an idle life this year, I shall have to do something to support myself—that is all."

And so saying, she drew on her gloves, and set out on her long walk to the newspaper offices.

Released from the paralyzing influence of Mrs. Llewellyn's treatment, the mind of Gladys recovered all that natural strength and elasticity that misfortune had no power to crush and destroy. She saw what was before her; she knew what she ought to do, and she acted with promptitude. She went first to the office of the principal morning paper, and inserted two advertisements. The first ran thus:

"Lieutenant Arthur Powis.—If these lines should reach your eyes, you may hear good news by addressing a note to G. P., Post Office, till called for."

The second advertisement set forth that:

"A lady, well qualified to teach the common and higher branches of an English education, with the French and German languages, vocal and instrumental music, and drawing and painting, would be happy to meet with an engagement as governess in a private family, or as assistant teacher in a school. A letter addressed to G. P., Post Office, till called for, will meet with prompt attention."

CHAPTER XIX.

ENTRAPPED.

On the Saturday of the second week, Gladys started for the post office with her lately ecstatic hopes somewhat reduced by continual disappointment; yet consoling her-

self withal, by the reflection that, come weal, come woe, she was free!

When she got to the post office, and asked the usual question, however, the smiling clerk, who had grown familiar with the pretty, eager, childish face of the daily vistor, put three letters into her hands! All had come at once! It never rains but it pours, you know!

Gladys hastily seized them! She could not wait until she had got home, or even until she had left the post office. She hurried up into a corner of the entrance hall; and she tore open the letters one after the other and hastily glanced over them;—her first thought, her first hope being that they might contain news of Arthur.

No, but they did not! They were all answers to the governess advertisement. And Gladys, with a sigh of disappointment, thrust them all into her pocket and hurried home, that she might read them there at her leisure.

When she entered the cottage, Miss Polly met her as usual.

"Come in, honey. It's chocolate and br'iled chicken this time! I won't vex you by asking you if you's got any letters, because I know it ain't no use," said the old lady, drawing her guest into the cosy room.

"Oh! but I've got the letters at last, Miss Polly!" said Gladys, as, all glowing red from the frosty air without, she sat down before the fire, and began to draw off her gloves, while Miss Milly took off her bonnet.

These poor childless old ladies lavished all their unclaimed maternal love upon this bright young creature, who had sought their protection.

"Letters, honey!" exclaimed the three sisters simultaneously and eagerly, as if the cause had been their own.

"Yes, indeed," said Gladys, gayly; "three letters! all offering me situations."

"Ah—ha! people's coming to their senses, is they?" said Miss Polly, exultingly.

"Well, now, take your chocolate and chicken, honey, and then you may read them to us," said Miss Milly, considerately.

Gladys obeyed them, as she almost always did, with a sort of filial affection and reverence. And when she had eaten and was satisfied, she took the three letters from

her pocket and put them on the table, and then she took up the first that came to hand and opened and read it.

It proved to be a letter from a South Carolina planter, who described himself as a widower aged thirty-five, with one little daughter, aged four years; and who wished a personal interview with the advertiser, and promised—should that interview prove to be mutually agreeable—the most liberal salary, on condition that the lady would take charge of his house and of the education of his little daughter. He required no references, and gave none.

The second letter was of later date, and had come a shorter distance. It proved to be from a maiden lady in Maryland, who had three orphan nieces left to her guardianship, and who wished to procure for them an accomplished teacher, to whom she would be willing to pay a very large salary. But she required the most unquestionable testimonials as to the character and ability of the advertiser.

Gladys opened the third letter. This one proved to be from Dranesville, a village within a few miles of Washington, on the south side of the Potomac; and it was dated only on the preceding day.

"It is singular," said Gladys, as she read the date, "that these three letters, each coming from a different point, and bearing a different date, should have reached me all at once. But such things will happen so sometimes, I know."

"Read it, honey," said Miss Polly.

Gladys complied.

The letter purported to be from a wealthy widow lady living on a plantation in the neighborhood of Dranesville, and having four little girls, between the ages of seven and twelve years, whom she wished to educate at home, and for whom she was anxious to engage a competent governess. As the advertiser appeared to meet her views, she would be pleased to conclude an engagement with her. She would offer her three hundred dollars a year for the first year's salary, and increase the sum as her daughters advanced toward the higher branches of their education. If these terms would suit the advertiser, the latter would please to direct a letter to the respondent, saying at what time it would suit her to come

to Dranesville, so that the respondent might send a carriage to the village to meet the advertiser and bring her to her destination. The letter was written upon deep black-bordered paper, and signed Elizabeth Fairbridge.

Gladys pondered over this letter, holding it in her hand.

"Lor', child! you needn't think twice about that! That's the place for you," said Miss Polly.

Gladys answered the letter that same day, saying that she was willing to accept her terms, and was ready to enter upon her duties at any time.

On Tuesday she received an answer to that letter, thanking her for her promptitude, and saying that the carriage of the writer would be at Dranesville on the next Saturday afternoon from three o'clock, to meet Mrs. Powis and convey her to Fairbridge.

"There! you see, it is one of the Fairbridges, of Fairbridge!" said Miss Polly, exultingly.

Gladys wrote one more letter, saying that she would be punctual to the appointed hour.

And she spent the remainder of the week in making preparations for her departure.

She still haunted the post office every day. But no other answer came to her governess' advertisement; and none at all came with any news of Arthur Powis.

"You will go to the post office and inquire, Miss Polly. And if any letters should come, you will put them in these envelopes and send them, will you not?" asked Gladys, putting into the old lady's hands half-a-dozen envelopes, already directed and stamped.

"Oh, yes, honey! I will do anything in the world you want me to do," said Miss Polly.

Gladys had been fortunate in finding a place at service for Ennis, who was to enter upon her duties on Thanksgiving morning.

So, when Saturday came, Gladys had nothing to do but to take leave of her loving friends.

She would gladly have forced upon their acceptance some presents from her slender stock of clothes; but they would upon no account receive them. They blessed Gladys, and wept over her, as she embraced them each in

turn, before entering the hired carriage that was to convey her to the Alexandria boat.

Gladys went down the river on the nine o'clock boat, reached Alexandria at about ten, and soon after took her seat in the stagecoach that was about to start for Dranesville. There were two or three farmers and their wives, who occupied the inside with her, but they were only way passengers, and were set down at various points on the road. So, that when the stagecoach rolled into the village of Dranesville, Gladys was its sole occupant.

The coach stopped at the village inn, and Gladys looked around, but saw no carriage waiting. There were plenty of waiters, hostlers, and loafers, however. And Gladys blushed deeply, and drew her veil over her face as she made her way through these and entered the inn. A civil servant woman showed her at once into the parlor, and asked her if she would please to have a room, and if she would please to have tea?

"No;" Gladys said she was only waiting for a lady whom she expected every moment to meet her.

The civil servant went away. Gladys glanced at the clock. It was not yet three, so there was nothing to complain of.

But Gladys had had no dinner, and she would have been very glad indeed to have had some tea; but, ah! she had no money to pay for it. She, the undisputed heiress of millions! She had spent her last dollar to pay her passage to Dranesville.

But the kind old ladies had not left her utterly unprovided. So she opened her little traveling bag, and took from it some bread and butter and cold chicken, and made a tolerable luncheon, with the help of a glass of water from the sideboard that stood in the room. She had scarcely put aside the debris of her meal, and wet her finger ends, when the servant woman appeared, inquiring:

"Are you Mrs. Powis, ma'am?"

"Yes," replied Gladys.

"Then there's a lady in a carriage outside as has come to meet you."

"Quite right," said Gladys, rising.

"And, if you please, ma'am, she says, will you excuse her from 'lighting, as she is in a great hurry to get home; and will you come out to the carriage at once, if you are ready."

"Certainly," said Gladys, rising to follow her conductor.

A handsome dark-green close carriage, drawn by two fine-looking gray horses, stood before the house.

The landlord himself held the door open, and let down the steps as the young lady approached. With a deep bow, he handed Gladys into the carriage, put up the steps and closed the door. And the carriage started—started so suddenly as to throw Gladys forward into the arms of a dark-veiled lady, who was seated opposite, and who calmly put her back in her proper seat.

"I beg your pardon, madam," said Gladys, in some confusion, as she adjusted her disordered dress; "it was the suddenness of the start! Have the horses run away? They are going at a tremendous rate."

No answer from the veiled lady.

Gladys suddenly looked across at her. Swift and fatal as a thunderbolt fell a terrible fear on Gladys! Acting on it—acting in desperation, she darted at the woman and snatched the veil from her bonnet, revealing—the face of Mrs. Llewellyn!

The screams of Gladys rent the air, as she dashed her hand through the glass side windows of the carriage, in the mad hope of escape. But the carriage doors were locked fast; besides they were in a narrow country road in a thick wood some distance from the village, and still driving at a tremendous pace.

A low, mocking laugh met her ears. And the next moment a strong woman's arm was thrown around her shoulders and she was forced back into her seat, and a handkerchief saturated with chloroform was held over her mouth and nose.

Gladys struggled desperately; but all in vain. She tried hard to avoid breathing the deadly aroma; but its subtle fumes penetrated to her brain.

The last things that poor Gladys was conscious of, as her senses reeled away from her, to the music of a thousand bells, were—the dreadful eyes of her mortal foe,

glaring down upon her with diabolical malignity and triumph.

CHAPTER XX.

THE HOD-BEARER.

We must return to the morning of Mr. Stukely's interrupted nuptials, and take up the story of that troublesome hod-bearer, whose improper intrusion into the church had sent the bride into a swoon, stopped the progress of the marriage ceremony, and thrown the whole company into the utmost consternation and disorder.

At the instant that Gladys screamed and fell, he shrunk back, shocked at the effect his appearance had produced. And, while the spectators were gathering around the fallen bride, he made his way through the crowd out of the church, and across the street to the building where he and his fellow-laborers were employed, and to which they were all now fast gathering to their afternoon work.

But here his manner, always strange, was now so very strange as to excite the wonder of his companions. Instead of loading his hod, and taking it up the ladder to the top of the unfinished wall, where the masons were laying bricks, he stood with that hod on his shoulder, and with his eyes fixed on the ground, like one struck with catalepsy.

"Mortar!" sung out a voice from the highest scaffolding.

But the hod-bearer, whose duty it was to supply the article, did not move.

"Mortar!" repeated the bricklayer, impatiently, from above.

The hod-bearer stood still.

"Mor-tar!" again vociferated the mason, angrily, and with all the strength of his lungs.

But the hod-carrier stood like a statue.

"Simmons, don't you hear? What the mischief's the matter with you? Are you 'sleep or drunk?" crossly demanded his fellow-workman, giving him a rough shake.

The hod-bearer started like one suddenly awakened from a deep dream.

"Don't you hear? They want more mortar up there," said his comrade.

But Simmons, as they called him, only raised his head, gazed at the speaker, and passed his hand slowly over his forehead.

"I do believe you're drunk! I tell you they are waiting for more mortar up there—mortar! mortar! mortar!"—shouted the man.

The face of Simmons revealed a gleam of intelligence, and he nodded and went to fill his hod. Slowly and dreamily he filled it, and then as slowly and as dreamily carried it up the ladder to the highest scaffolding, two lofty stories from the ground.

"Why didn't you bring it up before? I'll get you discharged for your negligence," said the bricklayer, angrily.

Simmons did not reply, or even seem to hear; he had relapsed into his dream, and stood stock still, staring at his feet.

"Come, hurry up with another load!" ordered the mason.

Simmons started mechanically, took up his empty hod, and——

A cry of horror rose from the men below.

The master-mason turned quickly around. Simmons was gone. A single misstep had thrown him over the wall!

And on the street below a crowd was gathered around his shattered and insensible form.

Some men raised him in their arms; some threw water on his face; some forced liquor into his mouth; but all was done in vain.

"Run for a doctor," said one.

"No use; he's as dead as a doornail," said another.

"Go for the coroner," suggested a third.

"Who's his friends? They ought to be sent for," said a fourth.

"I know who his mother is; she's Missus Simmons, as keeps the 'ole clo'' shop, No. 5 Tilden's alley," put in a newsboy, who had come into the crowd.

"She ought to be sent for."

"And so ought the coroner."

"And so ought the doctor; for, after all, it is the doctor that will have to say whether he is dead or not."

Three or four speakers had all spoken at once; nevertheless they were all heard and understood by some one or other; for three or four men all started, each in a different direction, to seek the persons whose presence seemed to be required.

"What is the matter here, my friends?" inquired a gentleman, pushing his way through the crowd, and up to the side of the apparently dead man.

"Why, sir, it is one of the workmen, who has just been killed by a fall from the scaffolding," replied half a dozen voices, all speaking at once, in the same or the like words.

"Lord bless my soul alive, what a fall! He must have been instantly killed!" exclaimed the gentleman, gazing, first up to the scaffolding above, and then down at the shattered form below.

"He was, sir; he never moved, nor even so much as drew his breath after he struck the pavement," said one of the men, putting himself forward.

"Bless my soul and body! You saw him fall?"

"Yes, sir."

"What was his name?" inquired the gentleman, drawing a note-book and pencil from his pocket.

"William Simmons, sir."

"Wife and family?" laconically asked the gentleman, who was writing in his note-book as fast as he could.

"No, sir; only widowed mother, 'round in Tilden's alley. We're a-going to carry him there as soon as the cart comes."

"Coroner been sent for?"

"Yes, sir; we're expecting him every minute."

The inquisitive gentleman made a few more inquiries and then went off, for he seemed to be in a great hurry.

He was in fact, the "local" of one of the morning papers; he was out in search of items," when he happened to pass that way and find one; and so he inserted a paragraph in the *Times*, which was later shown to Gladys to convince her that William Simmons was not Arthur Powis and that William Simmons was dead.

The reporter had scarcely left the scene when the mes-

senger that had been sent for the coroner appeared upon it, attended by several policemen.

The coroner, he said, was holding an inquest at the other end of the city, and could not come just yet.

And then, after a short consultation with the police, it was determined that the body of the unfortunate man should immediately be carried home to his mother.

It was accordingly lifted up and placed in a cart, and driven to No. 5 Tilden's alley—a little shop whose doors and windows were decorated by dangling dresses and every other sort of left-off finery.

The men who brought the body lifted it out of the cart, and passing through a grove of drapery bore it into the house.

The little woman behind the counter screamed with terror at the sight of the body, and sharply demanded to know why they brought "a dead corpse" into her house to frighten her to death.

"It's your son, mum," said the policeman who came with the party, and who now spoke with more abruptness than consideration.

"My son! I ain't got any here, you big brute! And if I had, was that the way to bring him home to me, without a minute's warning, you monster? It's bad enough seeing he's only a stranger, you hard-hearted wretch you! You've give me a turn as I sha'nt get over in a month of Sundays!" scolded the woman, coming around the counter.

The men laid the body gently down upon the floor.

"Land sake! why it's Billy Simmons!" exclaimed the woman, as she looked on.

"Well, and isn't your name Mrs. Simmons?" asked the policeman, who was too well used to abuse from her class to mind the hard names bestowed upon him by this woman.

"Yes! Poor, poor, dear fellow! How did it happen?" said the widow, compassionately.

"He fell off the scaffolding he was at work on. But see here! You say his name is Billy Simmons and your name is Mrs. Simmons, and yet he is not your son?"

"No more he ain't! he's only a boarder. Oh, poor, poor, dear fellow, what a pity! And he is such a hand-

some young man! And to be cut off so suddenly!" sighed the widow, kneeling down beside the body.

"Not your son! Now how do you make that out, Mrs. Simmons?" persisted the policeman.

"I don't make it out at all; I tell the truth. He is not; he is only a boarder. And I never saw his living face before he came here to board with me some time ago. And I don't even know whose son he is, or if he is anybody's son—there now! Do you think if he were mine I could stand here and take this so easy, you big old fool, you? Poor, poor, dear fellow! belike as you haven't got a living soul as belongs to you, though, to drop a tear for your death," said the shop woman, alternately snapping at the policeman and crooning over the body.

"We are glad the poor young man was not your son, indeed," said one of the workmen, coming forward and speaking kindly to the excited woman. "Very glad that he is not; but we were told that he was."

"Yes, sir," replied Mrs. Simmons, somewhat soothed, "that's likely enough. As many people do take him to be mine, 'cause he do board here and do go by the very same identical name. But my son is in Washington City, a-working on the Government works and a-getting of the best of wages, which I expect him home on a visit at Christmas. But this poor young fellow, sir! why he is no more kin to me than the man in the moon! Poor, poor, dear fellow! how dreadful! And he such a good young fellow! never fell out with his victuals, never once, while he was a-boarding, even on washing day! No, you never did, you dear, good boy!" said the woman, stooping over the body.

Suddenly she started up, half in delight and half in terror, exclaiming:

"Oh, I say, sir! He ain't dead! he ain't indeed! He's a-breathing! he is, ralely!"

"What!"

"Indeed!"

"Is that so?"

"Are you sure?" said the men, all speaking at once, as they will do when in a state of excitement, as they again gathered around the body.

The widow had spoken truly; the man was breathing, though still insensible.

"He certainly is, sure enough, though I'll take my affidavy that there wasn't a breath left in his body when he struck the ground!" said the workman who had seen Simmons fall.

"No more there warn't; but maybe it was only knocked out of him for the time," suggested another.

"I guess he was stunned," observed a third.

"Anyway, he is very badly injured, and I am afraid his death is only a question of a few hours or minutes. It is impossible a man could have fallen from that height and not be killed," said the policeman, positively.

"Oh, but there is one thing in his favor. He fell smash into the mortar, which was soft and must have eased his fall," said the first speaker.

"Yes, and all this time you stand there gabbling like a passell of ganders and letting the man die for the want of a doctor! One of you go right straight off and fetch one. And the rest of you lift the poor fellow up and bring him upstairs and lay him on his bed! And I'll follow as soon as I get Lucy upstairs to mind the shop. Lucy! Lucy! I say, come here."

A young girl ran up from the basement.

"Lucy, you stop here until I come back. And all the rest of you do as I tell you at once, unless you want that poor young man's death on your conscience."

The widow's orders were all obeyed.

As soon as Simmons was laid upon his bed, his injuries were more closely examined. He was horribly mangled, but his principal injury was a fracture of the skull of the forehead, just where phrenologists place the organ of "eventuality."

"Poor, dear fellow! He had been hurt in that same place before. He had a bad old scar right there, where the cut is now, only the way he combed his hair over it hid it. How odd it is! I always notice when one has had one injury, if they ever have another, it is sure to be in the same place! Look, gentlemen!" said Mrs. Simmons, lifting up the bright auburn hair and revealing the fracture and the old scar.

Simmons lay there breathing faintly, but giving no sign of consciousness.

Presently the doctor came, examined the man's injuries; made many inquiries; heard the whole story, and then said:

"This man must be removed to the hospital; he has no claim on this poor woman, nor can he here receive proper attention."

This decision gave much satisfaction to the workmen, who now dispersed, leaving one of their number to watch by the sufferer until he should be taken away from the house.

Late in the same afternoon William Simmons was removed to a hospital under the care of the Sisters of Charity. He was placed in the ward devoted to casualties, and laid upon a white bed, in a pure atmosphere, and attended by a skillful surgeon, and a careful nurse. But little would the poor man appreciate all the kindness bestowed on him. He lay there quite insensible to all that was passing around, and babbling of other times, places, and persons that seemed as if they must have been very far removed from his personal experience.

Hospital nurses are too well used to the ravings of delirium to take much interest in the words of a delirious patient; but there was such "strange matter" in the rambling talk of William Simmons, as could not fail to rivet the attention of the most hackneyed nurse. His words, wild as they were, were those of a gentleman; his themes, man's life.

In his delirium, he was at college again, spouting Latin and Greek, and solving mathematical problems. Then he was on a visit to a country house, babbling of blue mountains and broad rivers; of horses and hounds; of the chase and the game; or, he walked with some fair companion, to whom he quoted poetry, and discoursed of love; or, he pressed his suit with some crusty, but kindly old gentleman.

Anon, the scene of his mad imaginings changed. He was aboard a ship on the ocean, in a storm, and issuing orders with the tone and manner of a naval officer high in command.

Again the scene changed. He was flying with his be-

loved—he was married to her—he was with her in some home of peace and safety.

And yet again the scene changed. He was on the banks of a dark-flowing, night-shaded river, engaged in a mortal struggle with a murderous foe! And whenever his wondering mind arrived at this horrible point he always fell into insensibility for a space.

In all his ramblings he never for an instant approached any of the incidents of his workman's life. They seemed to have passed forever from his memory. But he lived over and over again, in fancy, the scenes described above.

The good sisters watched and listened in wonder.

One morning, while the visiting physician was standing with one of them by the bedside of this patient, listening to his wild wanderings, she said:

"Doctor, are you quite sure there has been no mistake in the identity of this patient? He cannot be a common laboring man."

"Yes he is, Sister Domitia! I visited him at his own home, among his own companions; and I saw to his removal here. There is no mistake," replied the physician.

"But a poor ignorant workman could never talk as this man does. Listen to him now! He is actually speaking Spanish, and quoting Camöens. He cannot be a common laborer—he must be an accomplished gentleman," said Sister Domitia, who was herself a most accomplished gentlewoman, who had left a high social position for this humble sphere of usefulness.

The doctor smiled and shrugged his shoulders, as he answered:

"You are sufficiently well read, Sister Domitia, to be aware that in these cerebral cases, there are sometimes phenomena that utterly baffle medical science and skill. We are not perfect masters of physiology; but psychology completely eludes us. We shall see that this man when he recovers, if he ever does recover, will return to his normal style of conversation."

"I will never believe," said the sister, "that brain fever and delirium can so inform an illiterate man as to enable him to quote Beranger, Camöens and Goethe in their original French, Spanish and German."

"He may have been the servant of some student or pro-

fessor, and heard those authors quoted; and now he may remember and repeat them, parrotlike, without understanding one word of their meaning."

"Doctor, that is very far-fetched!"

"Not at all. I have known things quite as strange as that to happen in brain fever. But now I must 'move on,' as the policemen say. Continue the treatment as before, Sister Domitia. I will see the patient again this afternoon. Good-morning."

The doctor passed on to his other patients.

But Sister Domitia was not satisfied. The more she thought about it, the surer she felt that William Simmons was no common workman. The interest and curiosity she felt about him induced her to set on foot the most diligent inquiries into his antecedents. And her position as a Sister of Charity and a hospital nurse, and her extensive acquaintance among the working and suffering classes, enabled her to do this with every prospect of success. But the most thorough investigation brought her but this result:

That William Simmons was really a stonemason's laborer, who had been known about New York at least a year past; and that he was not only a very ignorant, but a very stupid man.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DEAD ALIVE.

Another change came over the patient. He no longer drew brilliant pictures of the scenes in a past or an imaginary life. He ceased to speak, and he fell into a deep trance-coma that lasted several days. During these days life was sustained in him by the administration of wine-whey in teaspoonfuls, which he swallowed instinctively and unconsciously, without ever opening his eyes. But that in this deep trance a recuperative process was silently going on, soon became apparent.

One quiet night, when the visiting physician had made his rounds and departed, and the few patients were all

asleep, and the ward was in perfect order and stillness, the hod-bearer calmly opened his eyes and turned them right and left upon the long line of little white beds, of which his own was one. Some few minutes he looked thus about him, as with serene interest, and then, in a soft voice, murmured:

"This looks like an hospital ward or a school dormitory. I wonder how I came here?"

Sister Domitia, who was sitting by his bed, bent over him, but did not speak.

"Where am I, ma'am, and how came I here?" he inquired, in a weak voice.

"You are in St. Asaph's Hospital, and you were brought here by the direction of the board," answered the sister, gently. Silence ensued for a little while, and then the man inquired:

"Why was I brought here? What had happened? I don't quite recollect."

"You had a bad fall and was seriously injured."

The man said no more at the time, but fell into deep thought. Presently he exclaimed:

"Oh, yes; I know now! Was the man arrested?"

"What man, my friend?"

"The deaf and dumb negro. It was he who felled me."

"I do not know anything about this," said the sister. "Wandering again," she muttered to herself, as she poured out some liquid in a glass and placed it to the lips of the man.

He drank and fell asleep.

The nurse who was to relieve Sister Domitia came; but the latter said:

"You can go to rest. I prefer to watch by this patient the whole night."

So the nurse went away and Sister Domitia kept her place.

About midnight she heard her patient move and sigh. She stooped over him.

"Has my wife been sent for?" he inquired.

Sister Domitia hesitated. In truth, she knew not how to answer, since, if all was true that had been told her of him, he certainly had never had a wife. But as the eyes

of the sick man still continued the question that his lips had spoken, she answered:

"No."

"It was well not to send for her. It would have shocked her too severely. But now I should think she might come."

"I will speak to the doctor about it," answered the sister, as she administered another draught.

He drank it and fell into another sleep.

It was dawn when he awoke again. The patient sister still sitting by his side heard him stir, and leaned over him, and softly inquired:

"How do you feel?"

"Well enough, except for this weakness and tremulousness. I suppose I was stunned by the blow?"

"Yes."

"And quite insensible when brought here?"

"Quite."

"Let me see—how many hours have I been here?—I know it had struck four bells just before I left the ship yesterday——"

"Oh, dear!" murmured the sister to herself. "The doctor was right; the man's brain is permanently injured."

"And it was nearly dark when I was passing along where Bennett's Bridge crosses the Anacostia. It must have been six o'clock when I was struck down by that assassin. What o'clock is it now, ma'am?"

"It is about five."

"Then I have been here eleven hours. Have I not, sister?"

"More than that," evasively replied the sister.

"And my wife was not informed? I am glad of that; yet how anxious she must have been at my not returning all night; but perhaps not. I dare say she supposes me to be on duty on my ship. But she must be sent for this morning, nurse."

"I will speak to the doctor about it," said the sister, who was a much too experienced nurse to contradict what she supposed to be the harmless illusions of a sick brain. She was almost worn out with watching, yet she

determined to keep her place until the doctor should come.

The patient also seemed wearied with the few words he had spoken, and he subsided into silence.

Day brightened, and the watchers of the night gave place to the attendants of the morning. The patients and the beds were made tidy, and the ward was put into perfect order by the time for the doctors' round. They came in due time. And the physician who had special charge of this case came up to the bedside.

"How is Simmons this morning?" he asked.

"He has recovered his consciousness, but he still rambles a great deal in his talk," replied the sister.

"Ah!—I will speak to him. How are you this morning, Simmons?" inquired the doctor, in a hearty voice, as he bent over the hod-bearer.

"Better, I think; thank you, sir. But you mistake. My name is not Simmons," replied the man.

"Is it not so? Well, no matter, you will tell me what it is," said the doctor, good-humoredly.

"It is Powis. I am Lieutenant Arthur Powis, of the frigate *Neptune*, stationed at the Navy Yard."

"Just so. Well, we will soon get you up again, ready for duty."

"Doctor," said the sick man, "I am very anxious to be taken home. Can I be removed to-day?"

"Why, no, not with safety to yourself."

"How soon, then, do you think?"

"Oh, in the course of a few days, or a week."

"Not before?"

"Scarcely. You must be patient, you know."

"I will endeavor to be. But, as I must stay here so long, I wish my wife sent for at once."

"Ah!—then you have a wife?" said the doctor, in some little surprise; for he had believed the man to be quite alone in the world.

"Ah, yes; I have a wife. And I fear she is suffering the utmost anxiety. Last night was the first night I ever passed away from her," said the sick man, with a deep sigh.

"'Last night—was the first night—you ever passed

away from her?" repeated the doctor, with a puzzled look.

But Sister Domitia caught his eye and shook her head at him, as much as to say, "you must remember that he is not in his right senses yet."

"Yes, doctor, the very first and only one. And she is but a young creature. I wish some discreet messenger sent to her, who will not alarm her, but will gently break to her the news of my injury. Let the messenger take a carriage and bring her back in it. I will pay for it, of course, as well as for all the trouble I have caused," said the man.

The doctor, more puzzled than before, looked up into the face of Sister Domitia for an explanation of this rigmarole. But the sister only shook her head at him, and the doctor was not very quick in interpreting pantomime.

"I will give you the address of my wife, if you will be so good as to take it down: Mrs. Arthur Powis, at Miss Crane's, Ceres Cottage, Capitol Hill."

"Capitol Hill! Where is that?" slowly inquired the perplexed physician.

"Now, is it possible you do not know where Capitol Hill is? I thought there was not a creature in this city that didn't know that! The messenger will, at least."

Again the doctor looked up at the sister for an explanation. And as the sick man turned his face to the wall, she whispered:

"Doctor, he thinks that he is in Washington City. He is talking of the Capitol Hill there."

"Oh! aye, certainly! I know where the Capitol Hill is! And so your wife is there?" said the doctor, cheerfully addressing his patient.

"Yes; will you please take the address down and send the messenger?"

"Certainly," said the doctor, taking out a blank card and a pencil from his pocket, and making a pretense of writing.

"You will send it at once, I hope?" said the man, impatiently.

"Oh, of course!" replied the physician, heartily, as he returned the card to his pocket. Then he drew out an-

other slip of paper, wrote a prescription, and put it in the hands of the sister, saying:

"Give him one of these powders every two hours until I see him again. Keep the ice to his head and hot bricks to his feet." And he passed on to his other patients.

The sick man followed the doctor with his eyes until he had left the room, and then turning those sad eyes on the sister, he inquired:

"Do you really think he will remember to send for my wife at once?"

"He will do the very best he can, no doubt," replied the nurse.

The man sighed deeply and turned his face to the wall, and seemed to fall into perplexing thought.

The sister gave him his medicine, and then left him in charge of another nurse, while she retired to take her so much-needed rest.

The man lay quietly for about an hour. And then he said:

"If the doctor kept his promise, it is high time for my wife to be here."

"Did the doctor promise to send for your wife?" inquired Sister Paula, the second nurse.

"Yes, he did."

"Then make yourself easy. He will do it," said the sister, who really knew nothing of the matter.

The man was quiet for a little time; but to make himself easy for another hour seemed impossible. With the impatience of illness, he harassed his nurse all that day with inquiries of whether his wife had really been sent for. Toward evening, however, he yielded to the influence of the composing powders that had been regularly administered to him through the day, and he fell into a deep sleep that lasted all night.

Early the next morning, before he awoke, Sister Domitia resumed her watch beside him. He found her there when he opened his eyes.

"Sister, has my wife come?" was his first inquiry, given in the most anxious tone.

"Not yet," she gently answered.

"Oh, why is this? What has happened?" he demanded.

"Nothing; really nothing, that we know of. The doctor will be here presently; and I hope he will be able to give you some satisfaction," said the sister, in a soothing voice.

And in fact at that moment the doctor entered the ward.

The poor man watched him with eagerness as he passed slowly up the long line of little beds, stopping at every one that was occupied. He could scarcely restrain his impatience until the doctor came up to his own bedside.

"Well, Simmons, how do you find yourself this morning?" he cordially inquired.

The man stared and frowned, and then answered:

"I told you, doctor, that my name is not Simmons. It is Arthur Powis."

"Oh! haven't you got that out of your head yet?" said the physician, smilingly, as he laid his hand on the patient's forehead.

"Did you send for my wife, doctor?" anxiously inquired the man.

"What! not got that out of your head, either? Come, come, you must try to get rid of these fancies," said the physician, kindly.

The man frowned more darkly than before, as he said:

"Doctor, it is you who have some erroneous fancies that I must request you to get rid of. You mistake me for somebody else. I suspected as much yesterday. Now I know it. I do not know how the mistake originated. Perhaps there were other casualty cases beside mine brought in night before last, and in the confusion I have been misnamed."

"My dear good fellow, there is never any confusion in the reception of patients," smiled the doctor.

"I don't know how that may be, but I do know that you have made a great mistake in my case. My name is not Simmons. And neither do I know any one of that name. My name is Arthur Powis. I am a lieutenant in the navy and attached to the ship *Neptune,* now lying at the Navy Yard. Night before last, as I was returning from my ship to my home, along that lonely rode by the

river, I discovered that I was dogged by an ill-looking man. I turned to confront the fellow, and had just time to recognize a deaf and dumb negro monster, belonging to my wife's guardian, when I was struck down by a loaded bludgeon held in his hand. A crushing blow, a general illumination, and then darkness and nothingness. That is all I remember. I knew no more until I came to myself here. But I have a wife living, as I told you, on the Capitol Hill, about a mile from here. She is no doubt suffering great anxiety, for I have now been absent from her for two days and nights. She ought to have been sent for yesterday. She really must be sent for to-day."

The doctor stared and wondered. Was it possible that there had been any mistake. No; for he himself had seen this man whom everybody called Bill Simmons when he was first hurt, and he had not lost sight of him since. No; there was no mistake on his part. This was only a new, singular, and very interesting phase of insanity, he thought. And he would study it, he resolved. With this purpose he inquired:

"Simmons, where do you suppose yourself to be now?"

"Oh! I know very well where I am. I am in the Washington Hospital, near the City Hall. And my wife is about a mile from this place. She can be brought in half an hour."

"Simmons, what month is this that we are in?"

"You still think me out of my head? How strange! Well, I will convince you that I am not. I will give you the day of the week, the month and the year, although it is but two days since I had my head broken. It was on Sunday, the fifteenth of October, that I had that murderous attack made on me. And this is Tuesday, the seventeenth of October, in the year eighteen hundred and ——" here he named the preceding year.

"Now, Simmons," said the doctor, very gravely, "look at me. Do I look like a man who would cruelly deceive a patient?"

"No, doctor, you do not."

"Then listen to me: All that you have told me exists but in your own imagination. Your name is William Simmons. You were a hodman before you were in-

jured. You received that injury by a fall while you were at work on the top of a house opposite St. Asaph's Church. And this place is the city of New York. And the time is November, eighteen hundred and——" the doctor named the current year.

The sick man looked and listened with the most acute and painful attention. And as the doctor finished his statement a look of agony passed over the brow of the patient, who threw his hands up to his face and burst into tears, exclaiming:

"Then I am mad!"

And he turned his face to the wall and wept in the strong anguish of a man's despair; but he spoke no more.

The doctor gave the nurse a few whispered directions, and passed on to his other charges.

What was the mystery of this man's life?

CHAPTER XXII.

A LOST IDENTITY.

"Take comfort," said the Sister Domitia, gently bending over the suffering man; "do take comfort; you are already much better than you have been; and you will soon be well in mind as well as in body."

"Don't speak to me. Pray don't speak to me. You are very good, and I thank you very much. Only do not speak to me just yet. Let me try to grope my way through this mental obscurity if I can," said the sick man, pressing his hands to his temples, and drawing his brows together as with a painful effort to collect his thoughts.

The sister straightened his quilt, smoothed his pillow, and then, with a deep sigh of compassion, turned away to attend upon some of her other charges.

She was gone more than two hours; yet when she returned she found the man lying in precisely the same attitude, with his hands clasping his head, and his forehead drawn into a frown as with intense study. The sister stooped over him anxiously and inquired:

"Will you let me speak to you now, Simmons, and ask you how you feel?"

"Thank you, my kind nurse. I have been trying to see my way out of this dense darkness, and I think I shall do it," answered the man, gravely.

"There is no doubt that you will. There is a much calmer and clearer expression in your eyes now, Simmons."

"Is there? But, dear sister, pray do not call me Simmons. That really is not my name. And neither am I a maniac, nor the monomaniac that you and the doctor suppose me to be."

"Never mind about that now. Don't excite yourself over it."

"Yes, but I must mind about it. And get you and the doctor to mind, too. I have been thinking very intently. And I know what I am about to say to be the truth, strange as it may appear to you; yet not more strange to you than what you state appears to me. I am not Simmons, the hod-bearer, but Arthur Powis, an officer in the navy."

"Well, well, let it be so; only do not talk about it and trouble yourself over it," said the sister, soothingly.

"I tell you I must, sister, and you must listen, for you must be convinced. I am Lieutenant Powis. I have the clearest memory of all the persons, places, scenes and events of my life, from my earliest childhood, on through boyhood, youth and manhood, up to that dark night when I was struck down by the negro—that fifteenth of October, which, you say, passed more than twelve months ago. Since that night I remember nothing, until I find myself in this hospital. If what you tell me is true, which I suppose it to be, then there is a whole year totally obliterated from my memory—utterly lost out of my life. There is the great mystery. Sister, help me to solve it by telling me all that you know concerning me during the past year —the lost year of my life."

"Poor fellow, I will tell you, in the hope that what I say will do you some good. But pray, pray do not agitate yourself over it," said the nurse, gently.

"Take hold of my wrist, and keep your finger on my

pulse while you speak, and then you will know for yourself how quiet I will be."

The sister did in all things as the man requested. First of all, with her hand upon his pulse and her eyes watching his countenance, she told how strangely through his fever and his delirium he had raved of a life that did not seem ever to have been his. And how these strange ravings so stimulated her curiosity and excited her interest in him that she had caused diligent inquiry to be made into his antecedents, but that she had been able to trace his life back no further than one year, or something less; that during that period he had been employed as a stone-mason's laborer under one contractor, but that he had lodged with various poor people, always changing his lodging-house so as to follow and be near the scene of his daily labor, and that he had last lived at the house of a widow Simmons, an old clothes vender in Tilden's alley.

While the sister spoke the man listened attentively, with corrugated brows and eager eyes, yet with a tolerably calm pulse. When she made the last statement he said:

"And that was the reason, I suppose, why they called me William Simmons?"

"No; you had been known by that name many months before; in fact, ever since you had lived in New York," said the sister. And then she fell into silence, as if she either could not or would not tell him any more.

"Go on, dear nurse! What were my habits during that time?"

"Industrious, temperate, regular—in fact, almost irreproachable," replied the sister, slowly. Then she added, suddenly, as if spurred by a conscientious regard for truth—"except——" And then she paused again.

"Except what, dear nurse?"

"Why a singular habit that you had of stopping before a certain brownstone palace, and standing there with the hod on your shoulders and staring up into the windows of a young lady's chamber. This habit, harmless in itself, appears to have given great annoyance to the highly respectable family that occupied the house, as well as to your employer, who often deducted a half day's wages from you on account of lost time, and to your landlady, who would let your meals grow cold to punish you for

keeping them waiting, for, you see, you always stopped in going to and from your work or your meals to stare at those windows."

As the sister continued to speak the man's face assumed an expression of intense and almost agonized study. As she ended, he suddenly started, snatched his hand from her hold, and, with a wild light shining in his eyes, exclaimed:

"I stood before that house to listen—to listen to a—a sweet, invisible songstress! Was it not so?"

"Yes, yes; you remember so much, then? I am so glad! You are certainly on the way to recovery," replied the sister, joyfully.

The strange man slowly raised his hands to his forehead and clasped it tightly, while he sadly shook his head and answered:

"No, no; it has gone! quite gone! Only while you spoke the vision passed before me like the reflection of something felt, or seen, or done, in a dream."

"What vision so passed, brother?"

"The vision of myself, dressed as a poor laborer, with a hod on my shoulders, standing before a grand house, gazing up into high windows and listening to a voice that sounded like hers—or, rather, dreaming that I did all this, and trying vainly to call out or wake—but there! It has gone again!" sighed the man, in despair.

"You had better rest now, and not talk any more just yet," said Sister Domitia, gently.

"I will obey you, kind nurse; I will not talk since you wish me to be silent. But—I must listen! Tell me something more of this strange hodman, who seems to have been my transformed or dreaming self, sister."

"I will, if you continue quiet, but otherwise I must be silent. Well, on the morning of the day upon which you received the injury that brought you here, you met with a strange adventure——" The sister paused.

"Yes, well? I am quiet, you see!" impatiently exclaimed the man, trying to conceal his agitation.

"Well, there was a wedding at St. Asaph's church, opposite the block of buildings upon which you were at work. It was noon, I believe, or, at any rate, the workmen ceased their work to cross the street and gather

around the church to see the wedding party pass. But it appears that you held on by some strange attraction, actually pushed your way into the church, and, just as you were, in your workman's dress, with your hod on your shoulder, you positively forced your way through all the company, up the middle aisle, and to the very presence of the bride, who, on seeing you, screamed and fell into a fainting fit—which, of course, stopped the marriage."

"Oh, Heaven of heavens! I see it now! I see it all now!" cried the man, in a voice of extreme anguish.

"What? what?" inquired the sister.

"The vision! the dream! the nightmare! in which I seemed to be a poor workman, in coarse clothing, with the weight of a heavy hod on my shoulders, standing in a church with a fashionable company witnessing her marriage—and trying in vain to awake or to cry out!"

"That was not a dream; that was a reality!"

"But to me it seems to have been a nightmare—an hour of unreal pain and danger; for I cannot connect it by any regular links of memory with any of my past life! Those two visions, or nightmares—before the brownstone mansion and within the church! They stand separate from all my past life. I can remember nothing immediately before or after either. Sister, tell me, if you know, what followed."

"It seems that when the lady fainted at the sight of you and the marriage stopped, you were frightened by the effect your presence had produced, and you withdrew from the church and went back to work on the building; but that you seemed as one in a trance, until, being on a high scaffolding, you made a misstep and fell to the ground and were picked up insensible and afterwards brought here. That is all I can tell you of yourself."

"Yes, of myself! but of the young lady whom I frightened, sister, what of her?"

"I do not know."

"Not even her name, or her abode?"

"No, I know nothing whatever about her, except that her marriage was stopped at the time she fainted. I do not even know whether it has since been concluded."

"Heaven forbid!"

"Why do you say that?"

"Oh, sister! it is too long a story to tell you! Nor do I know whether I could tell it; it is so full of agony! nor, even if I could, whether you would believe it; it is so full of mystery! Sister!"

"Well, my friend."

"Do you still believe me to be a lunatic?"

"No, I do not."

"Nor even a monomaniac, perhaps."

"No—not now."

"Not now? What do you mean, sister? Do you think that I have ever been either one or the other?"

"I do not know! possibly! but let that pass now. You were about to say something else to me. What was it?"

"Do you believe me to speak the 'words of truth and soberness' when I declare myself to be Arthur Powis?"

"Yes, I do."

"Notwithstanding William Simmons, the half-witted hod-bearer of the last twelve months?"

"Yes, notwithstanding all that."

"Can you reconcile the two opposites?"

"Yes, Simmons—I beg your pardon, Mr. Powis—I think I can."

"Oh, then, give me your ideas on this subject! For it is one of more than life and death to me! it is one of happiness or misery! or reason or madness!" said the young man, eagerly.

"I have been a hospital nurse for twenty years. For fifteen of these years I had the care of a ward in a lunatic asylum. While there I had many opportunities of studying the various phases of insanity by the brightest lights of science. I studied many interesting cases of partial and transient mania, and among them a case that somewhat resembled your own."

"Good Heaven! then you really think that I have been insane?" cried the young man, in a tone of consternation.

"Yes, I do; how else can I account for the discrepancies in your life and conduct? I think that you have been insane—not from any chronic or organic derangement of the brain, but from a transient functional disturbance, caused by a blow on the head; a sort of insanity that need cause you no alarm, since it may be easily cured, is not likely to return, and cannot become hereditary. While

we have been talking together for the last hour, I have been studying your case by the light of my long experience in the lunatic asylum."

"And what do you make of it? Help me to understand it, sister, for I am yet too weak in mind and body to do it alone," said the young man, in a mournful manner.

"I think this, then: I think that you really are Mr. Arthur Powis, as you have stated yourself to be. And I think all else you have told me to be perfectly true. I think that when the negro felled you by that terrible blow, he inflicted a great injury upon your brain, and that when you returned to consciousness you did not return with the full possession of your mental faculties; your memory and your understanding were both impaired; you were, in fact, partially insane—from some accidental circumstance or other—for there is always some directing cause for the wildest fancies of the insane; you imagined yourself to be the man that you have passed off for during the past year. It was a case of monomania, that might even have lasted longer but that it was cut short by another accident. Your fall, the concussion of the brain and the fever that followed have providentially resulted in the restoration of your reason. A blow on the head caused your insanity, and a fall has cured it."

"'*Simila similibus curantur.*' But it is wonderful!" mused Arthur Powis.

"Not, not more wonderful than many other matters connected with our human life. Physiology and psychology are full of such mysteries that the sciences every day are solving. For instance, inflammation of the lungs, that sometimes originates consumption, has also been known to arrest its progress. And the causes and cures of insanity are very often the same. The case that I spoke of as somewhat resembling yours—inasmuch as it was a case of mania, involving a lost identity and caused and cured by the same agency—was this: An old and wealthy bachelor had a brain fever, of which he recovered, but with a strange monomania—one of the strangest, indeed, that I ever heard of," said the sister, with a smile and with some hesitation.

"What was it?" inquired the young man, with interest.

'Why, he, a wealthy old bachelor, imagined himself

to be a needy widow, with ten fatherless children. He dressed himself in woman's clothes, dandled a pillow for a baby, and begged work, or help, for his orphans, of every one who would listen to him. At last his friends sent him to our asylum, where he had the very best treatment that the last discoveries of science enabled us to give him, but in vain, for at the end of three years he was pronounced incurable, and, as he was perfectly harmless, he was removed by his friends. But observe. The very day after his removal he was seized with a brain fever similar to the first, and which happily resulted in the perfect restoration of his reason. The only reminiscence of his mania that troubled him was this: that he had had such a miserable dream of being a poor widow with ten hungry children."

"That was, indeed, a strange case, and somewhat similar to mine, though I hope you will admit that it was more ridiculous than any of my fancies," said Arthur Powis, with something between a smile and a sigh.

"Yes, certainly. I might mention other cases, in other departments of medicine, wherein the cause and the cure were similar. For instance, I knew a poor old negro man who lost his eyesight through receiving a violent blow on the head, that paralyzed the optic nerves. He groped about in some blindness for years, and then happening in his darkness to miss his footing and fall down the area stairs and strike his head upon the stones below, he recovered his sight."

The sister paused, and the sick man mused.

"I tell you all these things," resumed the Sister Domitia, "not to fatigue or excite your mind, but to teach you—or, rather, to remind you, for your own reading must have already taught you—that these mysteries of physiology and psychology do really exist, and often baffle the utmost skill of science; and also to assure you that your own case is neither incurable, recurrent, or hereditary, and, therefore, need not give you any uneasiness about your future."

"I thank you, sister. I thank you more than I can express for all your kindness. But—it is not of myself that I am thinking now, but of my young wife, who has not been absent from my mind for one moment since I recov-

ered my consciousness. Oh! where is she? and how did I wander away and become lost to her and to myself?" said the young man, in a tone of the deepest grief.

"That we cannot know at once, but we can write to her or to her friends and make all necessary inquiries. Do not distress yourself. Thank God, rather, for your recovered reason."

"Oh! I do, I do. But you will write at once, sister, will you not?"

"Yes, I will. To whom shall I direct the letter?"

"Stop! let me think; I have been lost to her for more than a year. She will probably have left Ceres Cottage long ago, and Heaven knows that it may have been herself whom I heard singing in the attic in the brownstone palace. It may have been herself whom I saw standing up to be married in the church—and honestly believing herself to be a widow! And yet I do not think so, either. I do not think that Gladys would have forgotten me so soon. So it could not have been Gladys. And yet—and yet—that bride fainted when she saw me! Why should a bride faint on seeing a strange man?"

"Mr. Powis," said the sister, gently interrupting him.

"Well, Sister Domitia."

"Do not let your mind fall into these perplexing speculations. Remember that you are not well yet. Dictate your letter, and let me send it. Doing practical duties is a healthy occupation for the mind."

"You are right, sister, and I thank you. I will dictate to you now. But I will not write directly to my wife, for I do not know exactly where to address her. I will write to her late landladies, the Misses Crane, of Ceres Cottage, near the Capitol Hill, Washington. Take that address, if you please."

The sister drew a little writing-case from her ample pocket—a convenient little case, often used in the service of the sick—and she prepared herself to indite a letter, at the dictation of the patient. It was a short, simple letter, not troubling the aged ladies with any account of the writer's temporary insanity and recovery, but simply asking of them the information whether Mrs. Arthur Powis was still their lodger, or, if she was not, when she had left and where she had gone; and, above all, where

she could now be found, and what were her present circumstances.

When the sister had finished and sealed this letter, her patient said:

"You are very kind to me, Sister Domitia, and I feel earnestly grateful to you. But—I have another favor to ask you."

"Yes—well, what is it? I like to do favors," replied the sister, cheerfully, as she closed and returned her writing-case to her pocket.

"I wish you to find out the name and residence of that young bride who fainted at the sight of me at the church. I really do not believe that she was anything to me, much less that she was my Gladys, for that would be too horrible to contemplate! No, I do not believe that she was my wife. But—I wish to be assured that she was not. Can you, without much trouble, find out who she is, and where she lives, sister?"

"I dare say that I can. I will send and inquire of the sexton of St. Asaph's Church. No doubt he will be able to furnish us with correct information. I will see to it at once," said Sister Domitia, rising, with the letter in her hand.

"And send that also by the first mail, if you please," said the patient, pointing to the letter.

"I certainly will."

"Oh, this doubt! this doubt!" groaned Arthur Powis.

"Now, my young friend, you really must exercise some self-control. You know as well as I do how much depends upon your maintaining a tranquil state of mind," urged his nurse, as she smoothed his pillows and straightened his quilt, and then left him to go upon her benevolent mission.

"Oh, yes, I know—I know! I know how much depends upon my seeming calm and self-possessed. But can I really be so? Insane!—have I really been insane for the last lost year of my life?" groaned the young man, tightly clasping his temples, as was his frequent custom now. "I suppose I shall never have, of myself, any very clear recollection of the events of this lost year. Only the salient points, like the invisible singer in the brownstone mansion, and the fainting bride in the church,

will stand out like the disjointed scenes in a delirious dream. Was it really Gladys whom I saw in the church? Was it—was it? How can I tell? If so, who was with her? I do not know. All is still confused—a distracting crowd of strange faces gathered around, one familiar face that seemed to be Gladys', and yet could not have been! And she fainted on seeing me, as Gladys would have done under the same circumstances."

He paused in his mental monologue, and strove to recall the scene, but strove in vain; and then he resumed his silent soliloquy.

"Would Gladys have forgotten me so soon! Ah, no! But then, again, after missing me so long, and believing me to be lost, or dead perhaps, she must have left those kind old ladies, and she must have finally fallen into the hands of that ruthless woman, her guardian; and, helpless and hopeless, she may have been driven or deceived into a guilty re-marriage. But with whom? With that idiotic Stukely, most likely. If so, I will kill that fool wherever I find him!" exclaimed the young man, with a clenched hand, set teeth, and flashing eyes, and an expression of ferocity and determination in his whole manner and countenance, that fully justified Mr. Stukely's previsions of what was to be his own fate should Arthur Powis ever "turn up."

"But oh! Gladys! Gladys!" exclaimed the young man, with a sudden and pathetic change of tone. "Oh, my love! my wife! where is she now? What has she not suffered? I dare not think! That way, indeed, 'madness lies!' And I—have need of all my reason! For I have a work to do! I must, with the aid of others, trace back every step of my career, through this last lost year of my life, and pick up every dropped link, that the chain of events may be restored, completed, to my memory! That kind sister told me much, but not all; since she could not even tell me how I was picked up, after being felled by the bludgeon of that murderous negro; nor yet how I came from Washintgon to New York! But I must seek all this information by tracing back my steps."

In the midst of his reflections the young man was interrupted by the return of Sister Domitia with a bowl of

savory broth and a plate of dry toast on a waiter in her hands.

"I have mailed your letter, and sent a messenger for the sexton of St. Asaph's, who will be here this evening. And now you must take this broth, and then compose yourself to rest. Otherwise you will be in a fever, and the doctor will find fault. Besides, you know yourself, how injurious to all your hopes and plans a relapse would be," said the sister, as she sat the water down on a tiny stand near by and raised the patient to a sitting position, that he might eat more comfortably.

The young man obeyed the nun in all her directions, and after eating the broth laid down again, turned his face to the wall, and honestly tried to go to sleep. And after a while he succeeded.

There must have been a strong reaction from excitement to exhaustion, for the patient slept an unbroken sleep for several hours.

When he awoke the sexton was waiting to see him.

The sister was careful to bring the patient's tea and make him drink it before she brought the sexton to his bedside.

The sexton had but little to say in answer to the young man's eager, anxious inquiries; but what he did say was terribly in point.

"Yes," he said, "he knew the names of the parties. The bridegroom's name was Mr. James Stukely. And the bride's name was Gladys—something or other; but, indeed, he had forgotten what. But the name of the elder lady was Mrs. Jay Llewellyn."

It was true, then! It was his own Gladys who was to have been married! And it was James Stukely to whom she was to have been sacrificed! And it was Mrs. Jay Llewellyn who was the arch mover of the whole matter! thought Arthur Powis, as, with white lips, he ventured the question:

"Do you know whether that interrupted marriage was ever resumed and completed?"

"It was not, sir—at least while the family stayed in New York."

"They have gone, then?"

"Yes, sir. You see we sextons don't often see such

things in the church as that broken-off ceremony was; so I had the curiosity to keep the parties in sight, and keep the run of them, as it were. And I found out where they lived. It was in a brownstone mansion in —— street. But they stayed there only three weeks after the interrupted wedding. They all went back to Virginia, where they belong."

"All?—the would-be bridegroom, the reluctant bride, and all?" breathlessly demanded the young man.

"All, sir; every one of them, I believe; for so I was told by the agent that lets the house. And I saw the house shut up with my own eyes."

That was all the sexton had to tell. But from it Arthur Powis learned for a certainty that the sweet invisible singer in the brownstone palace and the unwilling bride at St. Asaph's Church were one and the same with his own Gladys.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LOST LINKS IN A LIFE.

Arthur Powis, of whose identity there was now no longer any question, thanked the sexton for his information and dismissed him. And then he turned his face to the wall to think over all that he had heard. With a great deal of truth, the sexton had mixed a little error in his statement. Mrs. Llewellyn and her family had gone South; but they had not taken Gladys with them. She had escaped to Washington and they were in pursuit of her.

But on the mind of Arthur Powis there was no longer any doubt. Gladys had fallen into the hands of her treacherous guardian, and had been forced or deceived into consenting to a mariage with her imbecile son; when his own unexpected appearance in the church providentially interrupted the proceedings. And she had recognized him, even in his disguise and degradation; and that recognition had thrown her into a swoon.

Not for one moment did Arthur Powis blame his poor young wife; but his heart burned with indignation against

the false guardian and the weak bridegroom, against both of whom he mentally recorded vows of vengeance.

They had gone back to Virginia; and, according to the sexton's statement, they had taken Gladys with them; and she was still in their power, and, though the felonious marriage had been interrupted, they would still persist in their purpose and compel or beguile her into consummating it. Therefore he resolved, ill as he was, to set out for Virginia; rescue Gladys from the power of her tormentors; and appeal to the law to set aside the betrayed guardianship of Mrs. Llewellyn, and to restore the estates of Kader Idris to the legal heiress and to her husband. To investigate that affair of the murderous attack that had been made upon him thirteen months before, and that had inflicted upon him more than a year of insanity and loss of identity, and to bring the criminals to justice, was quite an after consideration. But to do anything effectually he must immediately begin to trace back the events of this last lost year of his life and pick up the dropped links of memory's chain.

It was now, however, late at night; the attendants had all gone; no one but a night-watcher was in charge of the ward; even Sister Domitia had gone to bed, since there was no one ill enough to require her constant vigilance. Nothing, therefore, could be done until the morning; and Arthur Powis was obliged to resign himself to circumstances. He was still so weak that sleep gently overcame him, in the midst of his anxieties, and wrapped him in forgetfulness.

So great was the reaction from his previous excitement that he slept very late into the next morning; he slept until the ward was put into perfect order for the day, and the doctor paid his morning visit.

The doctor came up to the bedside. Sister Domitia was standing there. Sister Domitia herself had been busy with picking up lost links. She had searched the navy lists of the current and the past years; and she had found the name of Arthur Powis on all the lists she had looked at except that for the current year. Then she had procured files of the Washington papers for October of the preceding year, and had found many paragraphs, headed: "Mysterious Disappearance of a Naval Officer;"

"Supposed Murder of Lieutenant Arthur Powis;" and also advertisements offering rewards for any intelligence respecting his fate. And she had copied all these paragraphs and advertisements and put them in her pocket to show to the doctor.

The doctor was now standing by the patient's bedside and inquiring, cheerfully:

"How is Simmons this morning?"

"Lieutenant Powis is better," replied the sister.

"Eh! what! has he infected you with his madness?" smilingly demanded the doctor.

"It is no madness—at least not now. There has been madness, or rather monomania; but that was when our patient supposed himself to be William Simmons."

The doctor stared.

"Oh, surely, in the course of your practice, this cannot be the first case you have met with of this sort," said the sister, a little impatiently.

"Just give me to understand your reasons for saying what you do," requested the doctor.

The sister told him all that had passed between herself and the patient; and between the patient and the sexton; and then she showed him her abstracts from the navy list, and from the papers of the preceding year.

"Humph! this looks as if the young man was Arthur Powis, sure enough," said the doctor, who seemed unwilling to commit himself by giving a decided opinion.

In the midst of the discussion the patient opened his eyes. Then the doctor betrayed his real sentiments, when he inquired:

"How do you feel this morning, Mr. Powis?"

"Very much better, thank you, Dr. Howard. Thank you, also, for recognizing me at last as Arthur Powis," said the young man, gravely.

"Why, I hope you do not think there was any willfulness in my refusing to do so before?" smiled the doctor.

"I do not; but now I wish you to tell me whether I can go on to Washington to-day?"

"Whe-ew!"

"That is no answer, doctor."

"Then, my dear fellow, no! It is utterly impossible. You could not stand on your feet for a single minute.

You could not sit up in bed for two minutes. You are much weaker than you imagine; although, mind, you are doing extremely well, and recovering as fast as possible."

The young man did not sigh. He closed his lips firmly and looked very grim, when he heard this sentence. After a little while he opened them again, and inquired:

"Doctor, are there no powerful tonics, or stimulants, or both combined, in pharmacopœia, that might give me a transient strength, that would enable me—enable me to perform the journey?"

"And drop down and have a relapse of the brain fever in the middle of it? No."

"It is of such vital importance that I should go to Washington immediately."

"Would not a letter answer?"

"No; for it would never reach its destination."

"Could you not not send a messenger on your business?"

"No; for a messenger would not be permitted the opportunity to deliver my message."

"Why, how is this? What mystery is this?" inquired the doctor, doubtfully, as though he still suspected the perfect sanity of his patient.

"Oh, sir, it is a long, sad story. But if you have time this morning, I would like to tell it to you, and have your advice upon it."

"I have other patients to visit; that will occupy me about two hours. After that I shall be at leisure for about half an hour, and will put myself at your service."

"Thank you, doctor. And now I wish you to tell me, if I am very self-controlled, and very careful to co-operate with you for my rapid restoration to health, how soon, at the earliest, may I be able to travel?"

The doctor hesitated, and then, looking into the anxious, questioning eyes of his patient, answered:

"Within a week, and sooner, perhaps, if you can get any friend to travel with you."

"Friend! I wonder where I could find one now? They must all believe me dead a twelvemonth!" said Arthur Powis, rubbing his scarred forehead.

But the doctor had already passed on to his other patients.

"Sister Domitia!" said the young man.

"Well, Mr. Powis."

"If I am to lay here several days more, I may just as well begin my work from this bed, and do it as well as I can."

"What work, friend?"

"Picking up dropped stitches! And as I must begin at the present time, and trace back step by step, I wish you to send for that landlady at whose house you said I lived last, and let me question her. Will you do this?"

"Certainly, I will do it at once," said the sister, going off immediately to comply with his request. She soon returned and informed Arthur that a messenger had been dispatched to fetch Mrs. Simmons.

At the expiration of the two hours, the doctor came back from his round of visits, and sat down by the side of his patient to hear his story.

In as few words as he could clearly relate the circumstances, Arthur Powis told Dr. Howard everything.

The doctor listened with the most interested attention.

The patient concluded his narrative by saying:

"I know that Mrs. Llewellyn instigated the assassin to that murderous attack upon my life; I know that she believed the attempt to have been successful; and that she sought to force or to deceive my supposed widow into a marriage with her imbecile son, that he might become the nominal master of Kader Idris, while she, his mother, would really wield all the power, and appropriate all the revenues of the manor."

"From what you have narrated, I think your opinions of her designs are well founded," said the doctor.

"I know they are," agreed Mr. Powis. "But now listen again! I told you, on the authority of others—for to me it is still like a nightmare—the scene that took place in church. Think, what would have been the consequences had not that ceremony been providentially interrupted! We have the sexton's word that they have returned to Virginia, taking my wife with them. She is in their power; and the iniquitous ceremony that was interrupted in the church may be resumed and concluded elsewhere! And now judge what reason I have for wishing to hasten to Virginia."

"But your wife would never consent! Having seen and recognized you in the church, as you say she did, she will never be so criminal as to consent to such a marriage."

"Oh! she is but a young and timid girl; and she is in the power of a wretch possesssed of all the wickedness and guile of Satan."

"Then write to her at once. Tell her your whereabouts; and tell her that you will be at her side before the week is out."

"The letter would never be permitted to reach her. It would be intercepted by Mrs. Llewellyn."

"Then send a trusty messenger. I will advance you what money you may want."

"No, thank you very much. But no messenger would be permitted to see her. She is, in all human probability, a prisoner in her own room at Kader Idris."

"What an infernal business it is altogether!" broke forth the doctor; but instantly recollecting that he had spoken too abruptly to a convalescent man, he softened down his tone and muttered, "Well, well, you keep cool and quiet as you can for a few days, and then you will be able to go down there yourself. And nothing of the sort you fear is at all likely to happen very soon."

"No, I think not! I think it will take months for them to get over the shock they all received in the church."

While the doctor and his patient conversed, a visitor was announced to the latter. It was Mrs. Simmons. And so the doctor took his leave, and gave his place to the newcomer.

But Mrs. Simmons was not alone. A fine-looking young man, who seemed to be a laborer in his Sunday clothes, accompanied her.

"Being as it were a sick man, let alone my own boarder laid up in a hospital, as sent for me, I felt bound to come; for all that Billy here—meaning my own Billy, and not my boarder—had just that minute arrove from Washington, all unexpected; which I didn't look for him until Christmas; and as I wouldn't abide to let my eyes offen him for a single minute, I just brought him along, hoping no offense to the sisters," said Mrs. Simmons,

panting for breath, as she sank down into a chair beside Arthur's bed.

"Oh, no offense at all," answered Sister Domitia, smiling.

"Well, and Billy, how are you, and did you want me for anything particular?—meaning not my own Billy, but you there in the bed."

"I am rapidly recovering, thank you. What I wish to know of you is—when and under what circumstances I came to your house to lodge," said Arthur Powis, fixing his earnest eyes upon the woman's face.

Mrs. Simmons stared. This was not the look or the manner, or even the words and tones of the hod-bearer; his look was wandering, his manner distracted, his words few and his tones gruff; this man's was the reverse of all that; and his late landlady stared until she found her tongue, and then she exclaimed:

"Hoity-toity! You're a putting on of airs, ain't you? Whoever heerd tell of your talking dictionary to me?"

The young patient's eyes kindled ominously. But Sister Domitia shook her finger at him, smiled, and stooping, whispered:

"I must take her aside and explain, if I can."

Then she drew Mrs. Simmons away from the bedside, and in a few plain words stated the case.

The old clothes vender stared more than ever, and at last answered:

"Well, there! I always thought there was something out'n the way about Billy, poor, dear fellow! And so he imagined himself to be a navial officer. Lor'!"

"No, no, no, Mrs. Simmons; he really was a naval officer; only after he received that blow on the head which injured his brain, he somehow or other got the impression that his name was William Simmons, and he labored under that delusion for more than a year," said the sister.

"Yes, poor fellow, he labored hard enough at that hod-toting, I won't deny that! And never failed to pay his board reg'lar like a honest man, and never grumbled at his wittles like a Christian," said the bewildered landlady.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A NEWCOMER.

While the sister was trying to make the case clear to Mrs. Simmons, and the latter was trying to understand it, the real "Simon Pure" was standing staring down at the face of Arthur Powis, until at last he exclaimed:

"Oh, I say! look here! I've seen you before!"

"Where?" anxiously demanded Arthur, in the hope that in the answer he might pick up a lost link or two.

"Why down to Washington, to be sure!"

"When and under what circumstances?"

"Good gracious me! why, that night when you went a-bathing and like to have gone to the other world!"

"Went a-bathing!" breathlessly repeated Arthur Powis.

"Yes! at least, we all thought you did."

"For Heaven's sake tell me all about it; for I have no recollection whatever of the circumstance."

"Very like you haven't; for the breath was clean knocked out of your body, and the senses out of your brains, by that everlasting plunge you made."

"Plunge I made?"

"Yes. You took a flying leap from the bridge into the water, and of course you struck one of the timbers that prop the old foundation."

"Friend, I know nothing whatever of all this! Pray tell me the story, as you would tell it to a perfect stranger. I am intensely interested in hearing it," said Arthur Powis, eagerly.

"Well, I haven't got any objection, though it does seem strange to tell a man his own story. And I'm afear'd I shall have to begin at the beginning and talk about myself; eh, sir?"

"Anything that brings me information."

"Well, then, you must know, sir, when we first went to Washington, me and John Howe, we wasn't engaged on the Government works, but had to take anything we could get to do to bring us wages; so we shipped aboard of a

oyster vessel running up and down the Potomac and the Anacostia—you see?"

"Yes."

"Well, one Sunday, when we had sold out all our cargo of oysters at the wharf, us men we had nothing to do so we took the rowboat and we rowed up the eastern branch as far as Bennett's swamp, which is a famous place to shoot ortolan, and reed birds, and partridges, you know?"

"Yes."

"Well, we couldn't push the boat up into the swamp very well—though I have seen the niggers do that for gentlemen; so we rowed up as far as the causeway at the end of Bennett's Bridge, and we drawed in our oars and sat there, considering how we should get at the birds, and whether it wasn't too late altogether to get at them at all; for you see there wasn't one of us as knew anything about killing birds—we was better at catching oysters, you know!"

"Of course."

"So there we sat like fools, knowing no more than the two dogs—which was nyther p'inters nor setters, but just mongrel curs—what to do. At last, while we was staring up at the bridge, which was just then getting to be rather shadowy in the twilight, we saw a man drop over it into the water with a great splash.

"'There,' says my mate, 'that's a man trying to commit suicide by drownding of himself.

"'No,' says I; 'more likely he is going to take a bath.'

"Anyways, sir, we rowed to the spot to see what the matter was; and there we saw the man tangled half in and half out of the water, being caught in the under pinnings of the bridge. That man was you, sir!"

"I know—I know!" said Arthur Powis, eagerly. "But for Heaven's sake go on."

"Well, sir, we lifted you into the boat, and one of the men threw a pea-jacket over you, for you was undressed, sir. And then we struck a light and commenced to examine you. You had an awful gash that laid open your forehead, where you must have struck in falling. At first we couldn't tell whether you were dead or not. My mate, John Howe, thought not; for he says, says he:

"'If that man meant to commit suicide, he's made a mess of it; for he has mangled himself and only half done the job.'

"'You fool,' says I, 'do men take the trouble to undress before they commit suicide?'

"'Oh! I didn't think of that,' says he.

"'He was going to take a bath only, as he jumped off he struck the under-pinnings of the bridge, and here he is.' Wasn't I right, sir?' inquired Mrs. Simmons' son.

"No, my friend. Neither you nor your mate hit upon the real cause of my injury. But let that pass for the present. You saved my life. I will not thank you for doing so, as I should thank you for handing me a newspaper, or lending me an umbrella; no! but henceforth, William Simmons, you are my brother!" said Arthur Powis, fervently, holding out his hand.

The young man was rather overpowered by this excessive demonstration of gratitude, and he blushed like a girl as Arthur Powis wrung his hand.

"I'm sure, sir, I did no more than my duty. Why, a heathen infidel would not stand by and see a drownding man drowned, let alone a Christian!"

"What next? I want to know what followed, and how I came to be called by your name," said Arthur.

"Well, I will tell you, sir. Well, you see, there you lay in the bottom of the boat, cold as ice, and growing colder every minute, with nothing but the pea-jacket thrown over you. Fortunately I had brought an extry pair of trousers with me, because I was told I should get soaking wet wading leg deep in the swamp after the birds. And though a waterman needn't always be particular about water, yet, you see, sir, I had the 'flambetary rheumatism once, and I didn't want to have it again. So I took the extry pair of trousers. And now they come right into use, for we put them on to you. And then we put the pea-jacket on you, right; and when we had made you decent we rowed down the river to get clear of the swamp and find a good landing-place. And there we landed and went to find some help to move you. It was the most lonesomest place to be so near the Capitol at Washington. Hardly a house to be seen. Well, we found a little hut at last; but the man that owned it

couldn't take you in; but he told us that the poorhouse was not far off, and we had better take you there. And he lent us the loan of his door, which he took it offen the hinges; and we took it down to the boat and laid you on it and carried you to the poorhouse. You were breathing when we got you there. And the master and the matron came out and looked at you and asked us about eleven thousand questions: Who were you? Where were you hurt? How did it happen? and all that! And we answered that you were out bathing, and, in jumping from the bridge to make your plunge, you struck your head against the under-pinnings of the bridge and stunned yourself. And though you say, sir, as that wasn't the way it happened, we certainly thought it was, and we told the governor so, and he believed it. Well, after a little objecting and so on, they took you in there. And there we left you, being obliged to get back to the oyster vessel as fast as ever we could. And I never saw you again, sir, until I see you here; for we sailed down the river next morning and was gone for three weeks."

"You saved my life, and henceforth you are my brother!" said Arthur Powis, with emotion. "But you haven't yet told me how it was that I happened to be called by your name?"

"Haven't I? I though that I had? It was all along of the trousers!"

"The trousers?"

"Yes; you see—but I better tell you all about it! At the end of our three weeks' voyage down the river we come back to Washington with a load of oysters, and the first thing I thought of after we had sold out was the man who had broken his head by jumping off Bennett's Bridge. So I just went to the poorhouse to ask what had become of you, and whether you had got over it, and so on.

"'Oh, you mean William Simmons, who had that dreadful fracture in the forehead from striking his head in jumping from the bridge?' said the matron.

"'The same,' said I; 'only his name is not Simmons; Simmons is my name.'

"'Yes, it is,' said the matron.

"'How do you know that?' said I, rather mad to see her so positive.

"'Why, because Simmons was the name on the pocket handkerchief in his trousers' pocket. And Simmons was the name writ on the back of a letter in the pocket of his pea-jacket. And when he come to himself we called him Simmons, and he never denied his name. And, moreover, when the clerk who was making out the report asked him if his name was William Simmons, he said he reckoned it was; and whether his friends lived in New York, he said he reckoned they did. But he seemed to be either a half-witted fellow naturally, or to have been seriously injured in the brain by the blow he received,' says the matron.

"Well, sir, I saw how it was in a minute. I saw, as they didn't know your own name, it was very natural they should suppose it to be the name found on the letter and the pocket handkerchief about you. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," said Arthur Powis; "and in the weakened state of my brain at the time of my restoration to consciousness it was equally natural, I suppose, that it should very readily receive any impression made upon it. And so when they called me William Simmons, I, being half insane at the time, believed that to be my name. But go on!"

"Well, sir, I asked to see you; but the matron told me that you were not there; that you had left the asylum three days before, with a young man of the name of Slosh, to set out and walk with him to New York in search of work. Then, sir, I left. And that is all I ever heard of you until I saw you here."

William Simmons had finished his story.

Arthur Powis lay, with his hands pressed upon his forehead, in deep and silent thought. Presently, however, he stretched out his arm, took the hand of Simmons in his own, and, holding it closely clasped, he said:

"You have done me an invaluable service, not only in the preservation of my life, but in the restoration to me of the lost links in my memory's chain. For, while you spoke to me, I began to remember, as a dream, the inci-

dents you related. In time I hope to recover the whole of my broken life. I have said that you shall henceforth be my brother. You shall. When I rise from this bed, one of my first cares shall be to acknowledge, in a more substantial manner, the great debt that I owe you. Let me see you again to-morrow. Good-by."

Mrs. Simmons, who had been waiting impatiently for this interview to close, now came forward to take leave.

"Good-by, Mr. Arthur Simmons—sho! I meant Mr. William Powis. I hope you'll get up soon. I ain't a bit surprised. I knowed a gentleman once, in a brain fever, as imagined his own blessed legs to be glass tubes, and was dreadful 'fraid the nurse might break them every time she straightened the kiver; and a lady who imaginated her head to be a hot loaf, and was 'fraid to go to sleep for fear the cook would slice it for tea. But they got over it, and so will you, and so good-by."

"Good-by," said Arthur, smiling.

When his visitors had left him, Arthur beckoned Sister Domitia to his bedside.

"Sister, if I am not taxing your patience too much, I should like to ask another favor of you."

"Name it, Mr. Powis. I am glad to be of service to you."

"Well, then, when you were telling me all you knew of my history, you spoke of a Mrs. Slosh among my landladies."

"Yes; she is a washerwoman, and lives in Catherine street."

"Well, Simmons tells me that I came to New York in company with a man named Slosh, who must have been of the same family, I think. Now, I want that man found."

"I will go myself this afternoon—I have business in Catherine street—and I will inquire of the woman."

"Thank you, sister. Ah! it seems to me that it requires all my breath to return proper thanks for all the kindness that is shown me!"

That afternoon Sister Domitia went on her errand. At about sunset she returned. And this was the sum of the information she had obtained from the laundress: That her husband, John Slosh, was a roving, unthrifty sort of

a man, and that in the last year he had gone to Washington, and while there had been taken up for vagrancy and committed to the workhouse, where he took a great fancy to a good-natured sort of youth, who was in the adjoining almshouse, recovering from a broken head. And that, when his term of imprisonment was out, he persuaded this youth, Simmons, to accompany him in his tramp back to New York. And they arrived together at the city, and lived for several months at Mrs. Slosh's house.

"The chain of memory is now complete," said Arthur Powis. "It is strange that I could not remember any incidents of this past year until they were related to me, and that then I remembered them as a dream! But all is growing clearer to me day by day."

Several days passed, and Arthur Powis grew stronger and stronger. But no answer came to his letter to the Misses Crane. It was, however, now of little consequence, since, from the statement of the sexton, he firmly believed that Gladys was not with them, but in the hands of her terrible enemy, Mr. Jay Llewellyn. Arthur grew more and more impatient to be gone.

One morning William Simmons came to him and said:

"This is the last visit I shall pay you, Mr. Powis. I am come to say good-by. I am going back to Washington by the night train."

"Going back to Washington!" exclaimed Arthur Powis, with his eyes lighting up.

"Yes; I can't get any work here to pay me as high wages as I can get there; so I have made up my mind to go back."

"Simmons!" said Arthur, eagerly, "is it necessary that you should go to-night?"

"N-no, but I feel as I'm losing time and money every day I stay here."

"Oh, then, my good fellow, do me a favor, and I will make up to you all loss of time and money."

"Any favor in the world, Mr. Powis!" exclaimed the young man, with equal cordiality and disinterestedness, for one grows very fond of a person whose life he has saved.

"Put off your journey till to-morrow morning, then; and I will go with you!"

"You, Mr. Powis!" exclaimed Simmons, in astonishment.

"Yes! the doctor says that I can go before the week of probation is out, provided I can get any one to go with me."

"Oh, then, I'll stop and go, of course! I'd stop two or three days for you, sir."

"Thank you, Simmons, I will speak to the doctor. Come around and see me this evening, and I will tell you what he says."

"I'll do so, sir. Good-by, sir." And Simmons went away.

When Dr. Howard made his afternoon visit, Arthur Powis broached the subject. But the doctor would not consent for his patient to start so soon on so long a journey, even in the care of an attendant. But in three days' time he should go.

When young Simmons came in the evening, Arthur told him what the doctor had said.

"Very well," replied the good-natured young fellow; "I can wait. Lord bless you, sir, there's no such hurry, if one has got a good reason for stopping."

Arthur pressed the rough hand of the workman.

"What a good fellow you are, Simmons; I really love you."

"So do I you, sir, I'm sure."

After this mutual declaration of attachment, the friends parted.

Arthur Powis announced to Sister Domitia his approaching departure; and she cheered him with good wishes and good hopes.

The doctor kindly advanced money for the expenses of the journey. And on the appointed day, a bright, frosty Saturday, Arthur Powis, attended by William Simmons, took the early train for Washington city.

The journey was a propitious one. Hope buoyed up the spirits of Arthur Powis, and enabled him to endure the fatigue very well.

They ran into Washington about ten o'clock at night. The first thing that Arthur did on reaching the station

was to inquire what time the *Pocahontas* steamer left for the points of landing down the river; for he wished to continue his journey straight through to Kader Idris. He was told that the steamer had sailed that evening at seven o'clock; but that the *Metamora* would leave Washington for the same points at seven o'clock the next morning.

So, late as it was, Arthur Powis—unable or unwilling to bear the suspense and anxiety of another night, which seemed likely to prove the last feather that breaks the camel's back, the last drop that overflows the cup—Arthur Powis, I say, resolved to go at once to his old lodgings at Ceres Cottage, knock up the old ladies, if they had gone to bed, and gain from them all the news of Gladys that they might be able to give.

William Simmons volunteered to go with his friend, and see him safely housed before leaving him. And so they hailed a carriage, got into it, and drove toward Ceres Cottage.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SEARCH BEGUN.

On the same night that saw Gladys again entrapped into the power of her dangerous enemy, the three ancient sisters of Ceres Cottage sat together at their old-fashioned fireside.

Now that Gladys, with her bright smile and cheerful voice and loving ways, had left the house, they felt that they were very lonely, and their hearth was very dreary.

For one thing, the fire would not burn well. It was made of green oak wood, and instead of blazing cheerily, as it ought to have done, it just soughed and sputtered, and smoked and smoldered, and oozed moisture from the ends of the logs in the most disheartening manner.

And then the one "dip" candle that stood upon the mantelshelf to light the room, instead of burning brightly, from some defect in the tallow or the wick, sulkily consumed itself with a dim and lurid yellow flame.

And worse than all, the night outside was gloomy to

the last degree of gloom. Since the sun had set, the sky had darkened with the double darkness of night and clouds—heavy, inky, wind clouds, that moved athwart the sky like avalanches of blackness. And the wind was up; not blowing at a brisk, hearty rate, like a healthy, inspiring gale, but rising and howling in long-drawn wails around the world, like some wandering ghost seeking rest; and then dying dolefully away in silence, like the same ghost sinking back in despair to its grave.

The three old sisters drew their chairs closer together around the dull fire, and put their slippered feet upon the fender, and bent their spectacled eyes over their work, and knitted away at those eternal gray woollen stockings, the manufacture of which was always their evening occupation.

It was upon this scene that Arthur Powis entered, startling the old ladies by his sudden appearance. It took some time to convince them that he was real flesh and blood, and not a ghost, and then they hastened to tell him that his wife had been there up till yesterday, when she had gone to be a governess with a lady at Dranesville.

He wanted to set out at once, but the kind old ladies insisted on his remaining over night with them.

Arthur Powis had a great deal on his mind as he sat down to breakfast next morning—a large amount of work planned to be done as soon as it should be possible for him to do it. He had to go to the Secretary of the Navy and prove, with the aid of such witnesses and certificates as he could bring, that he was the long-missing Lieutenant Arthur Powis, and that his long absence from duty was in no way his own fault. And then he must seek Gladys, and, lastly he must begin proceedings against Mrs. Llewellyn—not for her criminal practices against his own life, but for her abuse of the trust that had been given her in making her the guardian of Miss Llewellyn.

If Arthur had not heard from the old ladies that Gladys, in the humble but respectable position of a governess, was safely sheltered in a home of peace; if he had supposed that she was at Kader Idris, exposed to the ruthless machinations of Mrs. Llewellyn, he would

have made her immediate deliverance the first business of his life. But as she was represented to be in a place of safety and repose, he deemed it his first duty to set himself right with the Navy Department. But even this duty could not be done to-day, since none of the public departments were ever open on the Sabbath. He would be obliged to wait until the next day, Monday, before he could present himself to the Secretary of the Navy. And such being the case, he might, perhaps, try to see Gladys to-day. True, it was not exactly etiquette for a stranger to intrude himself upon the Sabbath seclusion of a private family; but surely in his case the circumstances would justify the act, he thought. A man violently separated from his wife for more than a year had a right to seek her when and where he could find her, he decided. And so he resolved to go to Dranesville to seek Gladys that very day.

Of course he was very silent while turning these subjects over in his mind—so silent that Miss Polly grew uneasy, and asked him if anything in particular ailed him.

"No, my good friend; I was only thinking whether—Sunday as it is—I could not go to see Gladys to-day. How does one travel to Dranesville?"

"Why, you take the boat to Alexandria, and then the stagecoach to Dranesville. But there don't no stage run on Sundays."

"That doesn't matter; I could get a horse at Alexandria."

"Then, if you're gwine to ride, you'd better get a horse at Washington, and ride the whole way; it will save time, and chopping and changing about with cabs and boats."

"You are quite right, Miss Polly. I will attend to it at once," said Arthur Powis, rising from the table.

"Now where are you off to?" demanded his hostess.

"To a livery stable to get a horse."

"Now you stay where you are, Colonel Pollard! There ain't no livery stable in a mile of this place; but if you will be quiet, I will send Harriet over to Brother Peter, and he'll lend you the loan of his white cob as will carry you beautiful, which he will be de-

lighted to do it, for her sake! And while Harriet is gone, you know, you can tell us the story of where you have been all this time, as we all thought you was dead." Miss Polly uttered this last clause in so imploring a tone that Arthur Powis could not but comply with her request.

As he seated himself, she went out and dispatched Harriet on her errand. And then she came back, and with the help of her sisters she hastliy cleared up the breakfast table and swept up the hearth.

And then she sat down in the chimney corner, put up her spectacles over her cap, composed herself to listen to a good gossiping story, and said:

"Now then, begin, Colonel Pollard."

Her sisters came and softly seated themselves on the opposite side of the chimney corner, and waited eagerly for the story.

And Arthur Powis, occupying the seat of honor in the armchair, immediately in front of the fireplace, commenced and related the history of the last year of his life.

There had been a little struggle in his mind about it. In telling them the truth, he had been tempted not to tell them the whole truth. He had no desire to exhibit himself to these old ladies in the character of a crazy hod-bearer. But when he looked in their simple, sincere, earnest faces, he felt that he could not withhold from them any part of his tragic story.

And oh! with what attentive countenances, with what uplifted hands and eyes they listened to the narrative! They occasionally nodded, or otherwise telegraphed their impressions to each other; but they did not, even by word, or an exclamation, interrupt him. He made his story just as short as possible. And when he had finished it, Miss Polly drew a deep breath and exclaimed:

"And so it ralely was you just as she first thought it was when she seen you in the church; though afterward they almost proved to her as it could not a been you, but was a rale hod-bearer; which besides all that, fell offen the top of a house and was killed on the spot!"

"Did they make my wife believe that?"

"In course they did; and I think, from what she told me, as they must a-believed it theirselves."

"She told you all that had happened to her while she was in the power of that infamous woman, did she not?"

"In course she did—every word on it."

"Tell it to me! and especially tell me by what means she was forced or betrayed into consenting to that horrible marriage," said Arthur Powis, eagerly.

"Why, by them drugs, to be sure. They gave her stupefying drugs to take away her senses, so as they could do as they pleased with her, and so—— Oh! oh! oh! Colonel Pollard, what is the matter with you, sir?" Miss Polly suddenly broke off and exclaimed, as Arthur Powis sprang up and began to pace the floor with wild strides, exclaiming:

"They shall pay the full penalty of their crimes! That man shall die! and that woman shall languish in prison for all the remaining years of her infamous life!"

"Well, so they shall, my dear; and go to purgatory afterward! only don't go on so, that's a dear. You do harry my nerves awful. And you see I ain't as young I as used to be," said Miss Polly, coaxingly, as if she had been speaking to a child.

Arthur Powis returned to his seat.

"Tell me, my good friend," he said—"tell me, straight through, the whole story of Gladys' wrongs and sufferings, from the time she missed me to this present time."

"Well, I will, if you will listen quietly," said Miss Polly.

But for Miss Polly to tell a story straight through was an utter impossibility. She had no faculty for narration, no idea of time, place, and unity; and she jumbled up summer, winter, autumn and spring—Forest Lodge, New York, Kader Idris and Norfolk—in the most distracting manner. And at the least sign of impatience from Arthur Powis she became so perplexed as to be utterly unintelligible.

It was only by the most patient and careful cross-examination that Arthur Powis was enabled to arrive at anything like the truth of Gladys' story.

"You say, dear Miss Polly, that my poor Gladys became the mother of a little girl while staying in that house in New York?" he asked, at one point in her confused narrative.

"No, no, I didn't. It was a wax doll, and she used to sing Pursy All-u-m's son to it; that was when she was stupefied with them drugs."

"Perdition! oh!"

"Now don't, Colonel Pollard—don't! that's a dear. It do harry my nerves so."

"Where was the babe born, then, Miss Polly?"

"It wasn't born nowhere, dear; it was a wax doll, I keep a telling you."

"But," said Arthur, putting a strong constraint upon himself, and speaking very mildly, "you told me that my dear Gladys had a child."

"Oh, yes! but that was before that."

"Where was her child born, and under what circumstances?"

"Stop—let me see. It was in the country somewhere, at a place called—wait a minute—I'll tell you—called Rout—Gout—Trout—yes, that's it!—Trout's Point. And the doctor as waited on her took the child to put it out to nuss——"

"And the doctor's name; what was that?"

"Wait a bit! The doctor's name? It had something to do with kinfolks, I know. Dr. Mother—Brother—Brotherwell? No—it ended with a 'ton.' Mother—Motherton—that was it! Dr. Motherton took the child to put to nuss, and they all went to New York to that house where she was shut up in the fourth story, and used to amuse herself singing Pursy Allum's son."

"And," inquired Arthur, in breathless anxiety, "the child—did I understand you to say that the child died?"

"Lor, no! How could it die when it was a wax doll? No; when she got over the drugs, she was so disgusted with her own foolishness, as she called it, and the dangers as it had led her into, that she went and flung the doll away, which was a sort of pity, too, seeing as the poor, nonsensible immidge had been a kind of comfort to her."

"Oh, Miss Polly! Miss Polly! I am not asking after

any wax doll! I am asking after my wife's own dear child, that you tell me was born at Prout's Point."

"But goodness me, Colonel Pollard! I am talking of what happened in New York! I can't help it if you can't understand! I do suppose your head is weak, all along of being knocked about so much!" answered Miss Polly, a little impatiently, in her turn.

"No, you cannot help it," said Arthur Powis, gently and sadly. "You cannot help it! I must get the whole story from my dear, wronged love, as soon as I see her, which, please Heaven, shall be before this day's sun sets!"

And, as the horse that had been sent for his use had been standing for about ten minutes before the door, Mr. Powis arose to prepare for his departure.

"You will please to give me directions how to proceed after arriving at Dranesville?" said Arthur.

"I don't know as we can; but you might find out by looking at the letters as Mrs. Fairbricks writ to her for her guidance! She left them all here, in her bureau drawer, and here is the key," said Miss Polly, taking a small key from a basket and handing it to Arthur.

The young man took it with a smile of thanks, and immediately went upstairs to his room, and went to the bureau and unlocked Gladys' drawer.

There lay all her letters neatly tied together. With a loving reverence he took these letters, untied them and began to look over them, one after another. The first three were from Mrs. Elizabeth Fairbridge, and were dated from Fairbridge, near Dranesville. But they contained no further directions how to reach her house.

"Well! I suppose I must go to Dranesville, and then inquire the road to Fairbridge!" said Arthur, to himself.

Then he mechanically took up a fourth letter, and looked at it with the curiosity and interest he felt in everything great and small that concerned Gladys.

But the moment his eye fell upon the postmark he started; for it was "Prout's Point." The letter was in fact that forged letter, purporting to be from Dr. Thomas Frorthingham, and pretending to describe the death of Gladys' child; and which the poor girl had ever since preserved with a religious carefulness.

"Ah! this will tell me something of my dear wife's child!" said Arthur, to himself, as he eagerly opened it.

Three thin old bank notes dropped out; but Arthur slightly brushed them aside, as his eyes devoured the contents of the letter.

"So her babe died! She had that trial, too, to bear alone, poor darling! Heaven's will be done! But from this time, I hope, with Heaven's favor, to comfort her for all past trials, and shield her from all future ones!" said Arthur Powis, as he folded up the letter and placed it in his bosom. He was about to close the drawer, when his eyes fell upon the three thin old bank notes, and he carelessly picked them up, supposing them to be of small value; but when he looked at them his countenance changed and lighted up!

Each note was a five-hundred-dollar one.

"Fifteen hundred dollars!" exclaimed Arthur Powis, in astonishment. Then, after a moment's reflection, he added: "This must be the money my dear love supposed that she had lost, and of which the old ladies told me! But how ever could it have got here?" He reflected a little longer and then exclaimed:

"Oh! I see! My poor love, doubtless, put it here herself for better security; but did it in a fit of absence of mind, and afterward, in the terrors of her position and the hurry of her flight, she forgot that she had changed its hiding place. And even when the money was missed, and when they were all looking for it, they might have turned this letter over a dozen times without ever suspecting what it contained—these thin notes take up so little room in the folds; and they certainly never could have found it unless she had chanced to recollect where she had put it." With this solution of the mystery, which was probably the right solution, Arthur Powis put the three notes in his pocketbook, and replaced the letters and locked the drawer and ran downstairs to tell the three old ladies of this piece of good fortune.

"Well, I never did!" exclaimed Miss Polly. "Who ever would have thought of looking inside of a little letter for so much money as all that comes to? I looked about for a roll of bank notes as thick as your

arm, Colonel Powis! and this little bit the fifteen hundred dollars as was lost! Why it don't look to me to be more'n three dollars!"

Arthur Powis showed her the figures on each note and then replaced them in his pocketbook.

And then he took his greatcoat that Miss Polly had hung upon the back of a chair before the fire to warm; put it on, drew on his gloves, took his hat, bade an affectionate good-by to each of his hostesses, mounted his horse and rode off in search of his lost ladylove.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON THE TRAIL.

The steed upon which Arthur Powis went forth to his adventure was certainly not a very handsome horse; it was a stout, short-bodied, white cob, better built for service and safety than for elegance and display. And, upon the whole, it was a very good horse for the forty miles of rough road and hard riding that lay before it.

As the young man rode away from the gate of Ceres Cottage he looked up anxiously at the sky.

The day that had dawned so brightly was now darkened with clouds that threatened snow.

And by the time he reached the long bridge that crosses the Potomac River, the snow was beginning to sift downward in that fine, white, downy dust that promises a long-continued fall and two or three feet of depth.

This gave him some uneasiness; but still he hoped to reach the point of his destination before the roads should become impassable. And he fully resolved, be the weather or his health what they might, he would go on to Dranesville and see Gladys that night.

So, as soon as he was across the bridge, he put whip to his horse and started at a good pace for Alexandria, which was the first stage of his journey.

By the time he reached the sleepy old town the ground and the roofs of the houses were well covered with snow. He did not pause, but rode directly through the slumberous streets and took the road to Dranesville.

The greater part of his way now lay through a thick forest, whose closely-entangled boughs and twigs were now covered with snow instead of leaves—clothed in virgin white instead of fairy green.

As he rode onward through the wintry woods, he also, with his steed, became thickly covered with snow; so that both together looked not unlike the figure of Death on the Pale Horse.

It was quite late in the afternoon when—cold, tired and hungry—he reached the little village called Fairfax Court House, which was the second stage of his journey.

He rode through the deep snow up to the inn, where a number of weather-bound travelers were already taking shelter from the thickening storm.

"Have your horse put up, sir?" inquired the negro hostler, who took the reins from his hands as he sprang from the saddle.

"No," replied Mr. Powis, shaking the snow from his clothing; "but take him under shelter somewhere; take the saddle off him, rub him down, and give him a good feed of corn."

And as the man led the horse away, the rider walked into the parlor of the inn, where a number of half-frozen travelers, in riding-coats and top-boots, were standing around a huge hickory wood fire and discussing the inclemency of the weather and other subjects.

A waiter entered to take the orders of the newcomer.

"A room, sir?" he inquired, with a bow.

"No; but you may bring me a cup of strong coffee and a plate of beefsteak immediately."

The waiter went out to fill this order, and Mr. Powis walked up to the fire to dry his coat.

The other travelers, who had arrived before him, and had been around the hearth for some time, were now so well warmed and dried that they were beginning to be roasted. So with one accord they fell back to make room for the newcomer, and dropped into armchairs in groups about the room.

Arthur Powis stood alone on the rug, with his back to the fire. Wrapt in his own thoughts, he paid no attention to the conversation that was going on around him, until

the words of one of the speakers suddenly roused his attention, and set his every sense upon the alert.

"I am sure it was the same young lady that came alone in the Alexandria coach to Dranesville yesterday afternoon. Because I was there taking a drink and giving my horse a feed when the coach drove up, and she alighted and went into the house—quite alone. And I noticed then what a pale, pretty creature she was. And in a little while there was a handsome green close carriage drove up to the house—a carriage that I know didn't belong to our neighborhood—for I think I know every carriage in it—four-wheeled and two-wheeled. And no one got out of this one. But a lady, thickly veiled, put her head out of the door and spoke to the landlord, who, you see, had gone out himself to meet an arrival which came in such a handsome traveling carriage. And the landlord called a waiter and sent a message into the house. And presently the solitary young lady came out, and the landlord handed her into the carriage and shut the door, and—— Well! I never saw horses start off at such a gait in my life! I thought they had run away with the carriage. But it appears they hadn't; but I suppose they were blood horses, and that was their way. When I asked old Briggs who these female swells was, he said he didn't know; that the young lady had come up from Washington to meet the old lady, he believed; but that they were both total strangers to him, as neither of them belonged to this part of the country. And indeed I knew of myself that they didn't; but I thought old Briggs knew the names of his own guests. That is all I know about it; but I feel morally certain that it is the same party you speak of."

"Yes, I think there is no doubt of it," said another farmer.

"Excuse me, sir, if you please, but what party are you speaking of?" said Arthur Powis, approaching the group of talkers.

"Why, sir, a strange party and a strange circumstance as ever you heard of," said a third traveler—a stout man in a gray surtout coat and top-boots—"if this weren't a respectable part of the country, and if there weren't peaceable times, I should say—looking back on it—that it

was a case of kidnapping or highway robbery, or murder, or something."

"For Heaven's sake, go on! What was it?" demanded Arthur Powis, thrilled with a vague alarm.

"Well, you see, sir," said a stout traveler in gray, "I belong to Centreville. And having business down in Washington, I left home yesterday morning and had ridden to within about a half a mile of Dranesville, when, in the road there that goes through the old woods, I suddenly, at the same time, heard dreadful, heart-rending screams, and I saw a dark-green carriage dashing along the road that I was riding on. I thought, of course, that the horses had run away with the carriage, and I jumped off my horse to run and seize the leader's head and stop them; and while I was running toward the horses and the horses toward me, I caught a glimpse of a young, pale, scared-looking face, thrust, screaming, out of the window one minute and snatched back the next. Well, I thought, naturally enough, that she was frightened at the running horses, and was trying to jump out to save herself, and very imprudently, too; because she might have been killed in the attempt. And I thought some one inside more self-possessed than herself had pulled her in again. Anyway, all these thoughts passed through my mind like lightning, as I made a dash forward and seized the leader and stopped the running horses——"

"You stopped them?" breathlessly demanded Arthur Powis.

"Yes, and now mind what followed! The minute I laid my hand on the leader's bit and the horses reared, the driver, instead of holding them in, just raised himself in his seat and hit me a clip over the head with the butt end of his whip, and then lashed his horses into a run again. And I just had time to reel back to save myself from being thrown down and trampled to death when——"

"They got off?" demanded Arthur.

"They whirled up the road like a tornado, leaving me standing there confounded! I am sorry now that I had not had the presence of mind to mount my horse and gallop after the carriage to see what came of it. But there! I had not, and that's the truth! So after I had recovered

myself a little, I mounted my horse and pursued my journey. I did not put up at Dranesville last night, or I might have heard more about that party, but I put up at a friend's house. And now, all I have got to say is this: if I ever do meet with that brute of a coachman again, and fail to thrash him into better manners, I hope he'll finish me the next time he assaults me, that's all!" And the man in the gray surtout took his pipe from his pocket and filled it, and went to the fireplace to light it.

"And I am sure, sir," said the first traveler who had spoken, "quite sure that it was the same party that left Dranesville about the same time."

"Yes, I think that is reduced to a certainty," answered Arthur Powis. And then he added mentally—"and to an equal certainty that my dearest love has been again entrapped into the power of that ruthless woman."

At this monent the waiter entered to say that the gentleman's lunch was ready in the dining-room, and Arthur Powis left the parlor and went thither.

"Have my horse brought around immediately," he said, as he seated himself at the table.

The waiter left the room to give the proper directions, and Arthur Powis tried to benefit by the meal that had been placed before him.

In vain! Appetite was entirely destroyed by excessive anxiety. He drank the coffee as a duty. And then he got up and buttoned his surtout closely, drew on his gloves, and took his hat and hurried to the front door to see if his horse was ready.

The unlucky beast, whose evil fate it was to be compelled to carry his rider over eighteen, twenty, or more miles of a rough road, through a tempestuous night, on an adventure in which he felt not the slightest personal interest, stood ready saddled at the horse-rack, and testifying his impatience not to be off, but to be in.

The landlord, the waiter, the hostler, and several of the guests of the house were waiting in the hall for a look at the traveler who was mad enough to take the road on such a night as that.

The weather outside was, in fact, appalling. It was not yet dark, scarcely twilight, in fact—but the snow lay so

thick upon the ground that it was half way up to the tops of the fences, and it was still falling fast.

"You will surely think better of it, sir, and not venture out," said the landlord.

"I am obliged to go," was Arthur's straightforward reply.

"How far do you travel, sir?" inquired a sympathetic neighbor.

"To Dranesville," answered Arthur.

"To Dranesville!" echoed the whole company, in consternation.

"It is a good twenty miles from here," said the traveler in the gray surtout.

"You'll never see Dranesville to-night, sir," said the landlord.

"I will make the attempt, at any rate, friends. Good-night to you!" exclaimed Arthur, as he vaulted into his saddle and rode off, flinging up clouds of snow-dust behind his horse's heels.

"He's after that party! that's my opinion," said the stout traveler in gray.

"If he is, he won't fall in with them to-night," said another.

"I'll tell you what! You'll hear of a man being found frozen to death in the snow!" said the landlord, as he and his guests returned to the house.

Meanwhile, Arthur Powis pushed on in a cloud of snow—snow lying thickly on the ground under him; snow falling fast around him; and snow flung up in whirls by the horse's hoofs. Himself and his horse were soon covered with snow, and moved onward an equestrian snowball through the storm of snow.

Snow, snow, snow, everywhere; above, around, and beneath; nothing but snow!

It was as if heaven and earth were resolving themselves into snow!

Not a soul did Arthur meet in that solitary ride through the snow-laden forest!—not a soul in the world seemed desperate enough to ventuure out on such a night as that.

Not a living creature did he see except an occasional squirrel limping half frozen into its hole in the hollow of

some tree—or a poor little belated bird flitting across his path and hastening to its home.

Night deepened; and it soon grew so dark that he could not even see the snow, but only felt it falling fast upon his face and sifting into every opening of his garments so dark that he had to trust to the instinct of his horse to keep the middle of the dangerous road.

Still Arthur pressed onward.

The remainder of his night's journey was perfectly indescribable in its danger, horror, and difficulty. It was one persistent pressure onward through darkness, tempest and peril.

It was ten o'clock when both rider and horse, more dead than alive, entered the village of Dranesville and stopped at the inn.

There were lights shining from the windows of the parlor and of the barroom; but there was not a creature visible outside the house.

Arthur dismounted, so stiff that he could scarcely stand or walk, and fumbled about until he found a place to fasten his horse, and then he went up to the house and entered the barroom.

There was the barkeeper at his post, and there were a few customers sitting around the open wood fire. And all these turned in astonishment to stare at the "snow man" that had walked in bodily before them—looking as if he were an incarnation of winter or storm.

"Will you send somebody to look after my horse," said Arthur, stepping up to the bar.

The half-stupefied barkeeper rang his bell for the hostler, who presently made his appearance.

"Take my horse to the stable; rub him down dry with straw; give him a warm mash, and cover him with a blanket. Hang the saddle where it will dry before morning," said Arthur.

The hostler nodded rather ill-humoredly at being unexpectedly called upon to do his duty at so late an hour, on such a tempestuous night.

Arthur Powis turned again to the barkeeper.

"I want supper in a private sitting-rooom. And I wish to see the landlord immediately on business."

"Yes, sir," said the barkeeper, ringing for the waiter, who immediately entered.

"Show this gentleman into number three, and take his orders for supper. Then go and see if Mr. Briggs is still out of bed. And if he is, tell him that a gentleman in number three is waiting to see him on business."

The waiter lighted a candle and led the way into a small sitting-room, where there was a fire nearly burnt out.

"What would you please to have for supper, sir?"

"Anything at all that is ready. I want to see the landlord, first of all."

The waiter replenished the fire from a box of wood that was near at hand, and then went out to perform his errands.

Arthur Powis took off his wet overcoat and hung it up, and then drew a chair to the fire to dry his feet, while he waited for the landlord.

"Old Briggs," as he was generally called, soon afterward entered.

"You wanted to see me, sir!" he said, addressing his new guest.

"Yes; I wish to talk with you a few minutes. Sit down."

The landlord drew a chair opposite to that of his guest, seated himself; placed his hands on his knees; and looked attentive and interested.

"There was a young lady arrived here last night by the Alexandria coach?"

"There was, sir!" said the landlord, solemnly, as though he had been answering a question propounded by the bench in open court, that might have concerned a murder.

"Do you know the name of that young lady?"

"I do not, sir," replied the landlord, looking equally full of solemnity and curiosity; as though he expected some strange revelation from this singular guest.

"She came here to meet a lady by appointment," continued Arthur.

"She did, sir," responded the witness.

"Do you know who that lady was?"

"I do not, sir."

"Do you suspect her to have been any one in particular?"

"I do not, sir."

"Did you hold any conversation with either of the ladies?"

"Only with the elder one, sir; and very little with her."

"What was the purport of that conversation?"

"Only this, sir: when I went to the carriage door—she came in a handsome, closed carriage, a dark green one, drawn by two fine, spirited gray horses—and seeing such a distinguished-looking arrival, I went out myself to receive it—and, as I said, when I went to the carriage door, she put her head out and asked me:

"'Is there a young lady here who came by the Alexandria coach, waiting for another lady to meet her?'

"I said: 'There is, madam.'

"'I am that lady. Go and tell her that I am here, but in too great a hurry to alight. And ask her to be good enough to excuse me and come out to the carriage.'

"Well, sir, I sent that message in by a waiter; and presently the young lady came out, and I handed her into the carriage myself. And it immediately started off at full speed, as if it were running away."

"And that is all you know?" inquired Arthur Powis.

"All I know of my own knowledge, sir," answered the landlord.

"What description of young lady was she who came by the Alexandria coach?"

"Well, she was of middle height and slender, with a fair, thin face, and fine, soft features, and very black hair, eyes, and eyebrows; and her voice was very low, and her manners were very gentle."

"Gladys! Gladys!" said Arthur to himself. Then speaking up, he inquired:

"What sort of person was the elder lady?"

"Well, she was very tall and rather thin; and she was dressed in black, and so thickly veiled that I could not see her face distinctly. But I judge from what I did see that she was dark."

"Mrs. Jay!" exclaimed Arthur, to himself. Then he said, aloud: "The elder lady who came to meet the young lady signed herself Elizabeth Fairbridge—and called her-

self a widow. Do you know any one of that name in this neighborhood?"

"Fairbridge? Lots of them!" answered the landlord, who, as he grew more familiar with his questioner, gradually changed his witness-box style of delivery for his ordinary tone of conversation. "Lots of them, sir; though not one that looks like this lady, if you mean that. For this lady was tall and thin, and, as far as I could judge, dark-complexioned—whereas, every one of the Fairbridges are short and stout and red-haired and fair! which all comes of their marrying in and in so much, to keep the property in the same family."

"Do you know any widow Elizabeth Fairbridge, who signs herself 'of Fairbridge'?"

"No, sir; but I know there is no such widow in the whole clan; and neither is there any one who has the right to sign themselves 'of Fairbridge'—(which is the old family seat, where the heads of the family live)—except Colonel John Fairbridge and Mrs. Colonel John. If that lady called herself a Fairbridge, of Fairbridge, she was an impostor, sir; you may rely upon it."

"I have every reason to believe that she was," said Arthur Powis, very gravely.

"The whole affair has a very queer look, sir, and set folks here to talking about it, I tell you."

"What road did the carriage take?"

"Straight on, sir, toward Centreville."

"The very road that she would have taken in going by a private conveyance to Kader Idris," murmured Arthur, to himself; then speaking out, he said:

"Landlord, you say that this affair set people to talking. Pray, have you heard anything of that party since the carriage left?"

"Well, sir, yes. I told you, if you remember, that I had given you all the information I possessed of my own knowledge. But I heard something from some others that makes me think that all was not right."

"What? What?" questioned Arthur, eagerly.

"First, sir, tell me—are you in the detective line of business?"

Arthur smiled as he murmured to himself:

"What next? I have been mistaken for a hod-bearer,

a ghost, and now a detective! What next? I wonder!" Then, aloud, he replied: "No, my friend, I am not in the detective line; but I have the deepest personal interest in the young lady who has been carried off——"

"Carried off! There, I said she had been carried off! I told Tom Hodge so when he told me what he heard," exclaimed the landlord.

"What, what did he hear?" eagerly demanded Arthur.

"Well, Tom Hodge was driving his team along the old meadow road that crosses the turnpike, when, just before he got to the crossing, he sees a carriage come tearing along, as if the horses had run away, and a young lady with her head out of the window screaming as if she was in fits; and he sees a gentleman coming along the opposite way on horseback, jump off his horse and seize the heads of the carriage horses to stop them; and at the same minute he sees the nigger driver strike the gentleman away from before the horses, and lash the horses into a faster gallop, and somebody pull the young lady back in the carriage, and shut down the window. And then he sees the carriage itself whirl away in a cloud of dust and the gentleman that had tried to stop the horses get into his saddle and ride on, cussing every step he went; all this Tom Hodge sees as he rides up to the crossroads. When he goes there the carriage was out of sight in one direction and the horseman in the other."

"I heard something like this from a traveler I met at Fairfax Court House this afternoon."

"At Fairfax Court House this afternoon, sir! Surely, you have not ridden through all this storm from that point?" said the landlord, in astonishment.

"Yes; but never mind me and my stormy ride! Tell me of that carriage and its occupants. Did you hear anything more of them?"

"Yes, sir! a gentleman from Unionville—which is on the same road—who passed this way this noon, hearing us talk of the strange party, said it must be the same party he had noticed at the wayside inn, where he had got his horse fed. And he described it—a dark green carriage, gray horses, a very silent negro coachman, a tall, thin, dark lady, dressed in black, and a young lady. But what particularly attracted his attention was the fact that the

whole party looked as if they had been on the road all night; and that the young lady was lifted out of the carriage perfectly insensible, being in a swoon, or a trance, or something of that sort. They went immediately to a private room; but only stayed long enough to get some breakfast and change the horses, after which they set out again, the young lady being lifted back into the carriage, still in the same dead swoon or trance! And they took the Warrenton road."

"Oh, Gladys! Gladys! Ah, my dear love! My lamb in the she-wolf's jaws! How you must have suffered! But—oh! how that she-devil shall pay for it all!" exclaimed Arthur Powis, breathing short and hard, as he jumped up and paced the room. Presently coming back, he said:

"What else?"

"Nothing, sir; that was all the traveler could tell us; and I have heard nothing more since."

Arthur walked up and down the room in troubled silence a few moments longer. Presently he paused, and inquired:

"How far is Fairbridge from this place?"

"About five miles, sir. But still harping on the Fairbridges, sir? Bless you, sir, they are innocent of this job!"

"I suppose so! nay, I know so! But I will not leave the neighborhood without making some inquiries at Fairbridge. The woman's use of the name was in itself a very singular circumstance. And by inquiring there, I may obtain some useful information! Is the road from this place to Fairbridge a good one?"

"Well, sir, if you was to ask me to name you, as a curiosity, the very worst road that ever I knew in all my traveling, I should tell you it was the labyrinth of cross-country roads, leading in and out, through hills and holes, thickets and swamps, between this and Fairbridge."

"Nevertheless, if it is at all practicable, I would like to reach there to-night."

"To-night! Lord, sir—to-night! Why, sir, if you wasn't a reasonable-looking young gentleman, I should think you had lost your reason altogether! To-night! through this storm! with this much snow lying on the

ground, and more falling thick to blind you! Why, sir, it was difficult enough to ride from Fairfax Court House to this place, as you must have found it."

"It certainly was almost impossible."

"Well, sir; still it was not impossible, seeing that you did get through. But I tell you, sir, that road from Fairfax Court House to this place is one of the best roads in the country; whereas the road from this to Fairbridge is one of the worst. And so it is many degrees beyond impossible for you to get there to-night. No, sir; you will have to wait till broad daylight; and even then it will be very dangerous to try it until the snow has melted away; for now, with everything two feet under the snow, you may ride into one of them holes I spoke of, unawares, and get your neck broke. Nothing more likely, even by to-morrow's light; but in to-night's darkness nothing would be more certain."

"I fear you are right," said Arthur Powis, drawing out his watch and looking at the time; "I fear you are right. Besides, it is now eleven o'clock. It would take me an hour, at the least, to reach Fairbridge, even supposing I should get there in safety, and that would bring midnight—too late an hour at which to disturb a strange family upon my own especial business. But, landlord, I wish to be called as early as six o'clock in the morning."

"Very well, sir; you shall be called."

"And now, in order to be quite fresh for my early journey, I think I will retire at once."

"Very well, sir; but did you not order supper?"

"Ah, yes—I had forgotten. Let it be sent in immediately, if you please."

The landlord went out; and his exit was shortly followed by the entrance of the waiter with a broiled beefsteak, fried potatoes, and the accompaniments.

Because he knew that he must take care of his strength in order to deliver Gladys, Arthur Powis forced himself to eat. And as soon as he had finished a moderate meal, he retired to the room that was made ready for him, and tried his best to sleep.

Nature did more for him than all his own efforts. Nature threw him into the deep sleep of fatigue.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AT KADER IDRIS.

Arthur Powis slept well until six o'clock, when he was awakened by the voice of the waiter who had been directed to call him at that hour. He sprang out of bed, and, first of all, went to the window, threw open the shutters, and looked out.

It was snowing still! Scarcely the dawn of day, and snowing still! the ground all heavily-shaded white—the sky all darkness—and the intermediate space filled up with the fine, white, cold, moist powder of sifting snow.

However, discouraging as was the aspect of the weather, Arthur resolved to proceed on his journey.

He dressed quickly, and went downstairs to the parlor, where a good breakfast was already awaiting him.

"Have my horse fed and brought around immediately," was the order he gave as he sat down to breakfast.

By the time he had finished his meal, his order had been obeyed, in so far as his horse had also been supplied with the materials of a good breakfast. But as the horse was neither in love nor in a hurry, he naturally took more time over his meal than his master had done.

And so it was seven o'clock when Arthur Powis at length found himself in his saddle, and about to commence his journey, in defiance of the gravest cautions from the landlord and all his satellites.

Of that journey I cannot write in detail. Who can describe the indescribable?

As for the sky, the sun was up, certainly; but it might as well have been below the horizon for any efficient light it gave.

And as for the earth, there was solid ground, of course, somewhere, but it was difficult to be found under the soft, deep, engulfing snow.

And then, as for the journey, it was through a thick, fast-sifting shower of cold, moist, white powder, and over steep hills, and into deep holes, and, in short, was such a desperate one as has never been undertaken by mortal

man since the days of Tam O'Shanter. It took Arthur Powis nearly three hours to get through with it, so that it was close upon ten o'clock when he reached Fairbridge, a fine, old-time manor, situated in the bottom of a wooded valley, that was now nothing but an abyss of snow and of bare forest trees, in the midst of which stood the red sandstone mansion.

A gray-haired footman answered his knock at the door, and took in his card, upon which, in addition to his name, he had written the words, "On business of vital importance."

The gray-haired footman returned in a very short time, and invited the visitor to enter the well-furnished library, where he was soon joined by a short, stout, red-haired old gentleman, who, walking briskly into the room, inquired, pleasantly:

"Well, sir! you wished to see me on business; what is it? But, be seated, sir; pray be seated," he added, waving his hand, as he dropped into one armchair and nodded to his companion to take another.

Arthur Powis sat down and explained his business—so far as to say that he came to inquire whether Colonel Fairbridge could give him any information concerning a person calling herself the Widow Elizabeth Fairbridge, who had within the last day or two engaged as a private governess for her children a young lady friend of the inquirer.

"'The Widow Elizabeth Fairbridge?' I do not know such a person; but I do know there is no individual of that name connnected with our family or belonging to our neighborhood," said the colonel.

"Yet she writes herself 'of Fairbridge,'" said Arthur.

"Oh, she does!" exclaimed the colonel, with a touch of jealous pride; "then clearly she is an impostor, since there is no one who has the right to call themselves 'of Fairbridge' except myself and wife and our children."

"Your answer is just what I expected, sir. I felt certain that the name had been falsely assumed by the person in question; but still I wished to hear my conviction confirmed by your lips. And, now, sir, another question, if you please," said Arthur, with a courteous and half apologetic smile.

"As many as you please, Mr. Powis," replied the old gentleman, waving his hand politely.

"Did you ever chance to know a woman by the name of Jane Jay Llewellyn?"

A curious smile came over the face of the colonel as he heard this question, and answered:

"I knew such a woman once. Excuse me, why do you ask?"

"Because I feel morally certain that she is the person who, for nefarious purposes of her own, has falsely assumed your name."

"Ah, ha! has she so? Well, it will not be the first time that she has aspired to bear the name! But for what possible purpose can she have assumed it now?"

"To decoy into her power the person of a young heiress, whom she is anxious to force or to beguile into a marriage with her son."

"It would be just like her to make such an attempt; but how can she hope to succeed?"

"By the most unscrupulous means, of course. But the story of her evil deeds is too long a one to tell you, sir, and besides, I have not the time. I am engaged now in hunting this woman down," said Arthur, rising to depart.

"Do not go, I beg you, sir. The weather is quite dreadful and the roads very dangerous," urged the colonel.

"I thank you, Colonel Fairbridge, but my business will admit of no delay," replied Arthur, buttoning up his overcoat.

With many expressions of regret that he should expose himself to such terrible weather, the old gentleman accompanied his visitor to the door.

And Arthur Powis mounted his horse and rode forth again into the storm.

He resolved to go to Kader Idris, for he felt persuaded that thither his stolen wife had been conveyed. But to go to Kader Idris, on horseback, across the country, along such roads and through such a storm as he was now struggling against, was simply impossible. Even his adventurous spirit acknowledged that. So he resolved to go back to Washington as fast as he could, and to take the Norfolk steamer and make the greater part of

the journey by water. He urged his patient horse to as fast a gait as the circumstances of the bad weather and worse roads permitted; but often, in the covered hollows, for instance, that gait was a series of plunging, slipping and wallowing, that made it very difficult for the rider to keep his seat, and nearly impossible for the horse to get along. Often he must have missed his road, but for the fact that, up hill or down hill, it lay all the way through a thick forest, where the trees on each side fenced him in.

It was nearly two o'clock when at length he reached Dranesville.

And there he found it absolutely necessary that his exhausted horse should rest. But no rest would the young man allow himself. Finding, upon inquiry, that he could procure a fresh horse at the hotel, he determined to continue his journey. While the fresh horse was being prepared for his use, he took a hasty dinner. And then he mounted and rode forth again, leaving Brother Peter's white cob to be forwarded to him at Washington the next day.

As he rode out of the inn yard he noticed that the snow had ceased to fall, and that the clouds were breaking away before a brisk northwest wind. The weather was growing colder and the ground beginning to freeze. Very soon it would be possible to ride over the frozen surface of the snow, and he would be able to get on faster, especially as his horse's hoofs had been roughshod for the purpose. With the fresh horse and the improved roads, he made such good progress as to reach Fairfax Court House in three hours. He only stopped long enough to give his horse a drink, and then he rode on toward Washington.

It was nine o'clock when he drew rein at the door of Ceres Cottage.

The old ladies were all up and keeping the supper waiting for him.

All three arose to meet him as he walked into the sitting-room.

"Oh, Colonel Pollard, sir! what a time you must have had in the snowstorm! And where is Mrs. Colonel Pollard, sir? We thought you would bring her back with

you; but, of course she couldn't venture out in such weather," said Miss Polly, officiously taking his hat and gloves, while Miss Jenny awkwardly helped him off with his overcoat, and Miss Milly drew the large stuffed armchair to the warmest corner of the fireplace for his comfort.

"Thank you, my kind friends; but how is it that you are ready with this warm welcome for me? Did you confidently expect me?" inquired Arthur.

"Why, of course we did! We knowed you couldn't get back yesterday through the snow anyway, even if the distance had been shorter. But to-night we thought you'd be sure to come, and to fetch Mrs. Colonel Pollard, too. So we made up our minds to keep the fire up and the supper waiting until ten o'clock at least," said Miss Polly.

Arthur sank exhausted into the armchair; while the sisters, without troubling Harriet, who was performing the office of groom for Arthur's horse, busied themselves with putting the supper on the table.

"And how did you find her, the darling?" inquired Miss Milly.

"I have not found her at all," replied Arthur.

"Not found her at all!" echoed Miss Milly, pausing with the coffeepot in her hand.

"Not found her at all," repeated Arthur.

"Oh! then you didn't go as far as Dranesville? The storm stopped you somewheres this side, I suppose?" inquired Miss Milly, while her sisters anxiously awaited the anwer.

"Yes, I went through the storm straight on to Dranesville, and even to Fairbridge; but—I should have had to go farther on the road to Kader Idris to find her," replied Arthur.

"What! you don't say!" exclaimed all the sisters in a breath.

"Yes, my friends; she has been again entrapped into the power of that infamous woman. Yes, my friends; the person signing herself Mrs. Elizabeth Fairbridge, of Fairbridge, was no other than that felon—Mrs. Jay Llewellyn."

The three sisters lifted their hands in horror.

"No! you don't mean it!" they at length exclaimed.

"Yes, but I do!" replied Arthur.

"And what are you going to do about it?" inquired Miss Polly.

"I am going on to Kader Idris early to-morrow morning!" replied Arthur.

"Well, here! take a cup of coffee, and then tell us all how, and about it," said Miss Polly, seating herself at the table and beginning to pour out the coffee.

And over the good supper Arthur told the friendly old ladies all the incidents of his journey, and all that he had heard concerning the abduction of his wife.

The poor old ladies heard the story with great wonder and distress and self-reproach.

"We ought not to a-let her gone! We ought not to a-let her gone!" they one and all repeated over and over again.

"Knowing what I do of the circumstances of the case, and of the character of my wife, I feel sure that you could not have prevented her, and, therefore, you have nothing whatever to blame yourselves for," said Arthur, soothingly.

But it was a long time before he could restore them to anything like peace of conscience.

Then he told them that a messenger from Dranesville would bring down Brother Peter's cob the next day, and take away the horse that he himself had ridden, and that was now in the stable.

And then he bade them an affectionate good-night, and retired to rest.

Early the next morning Arthur Powis bade adieu to his kind hostesses, and, followed by their prayers and benedictions, set out to walk to the steamboat wharf, where he arrived just in time to secure his passage on the *Pocahontas,* that was advertised to sail that morning from Washington to Norfolk, touching at all the intermediate points.

It was late in the afternoon when the boat reached Shrimpton, the little seaside hamlet that was most convenient for the landing of any traveler bound for Kader Idris.

Here Arthur got off the boat, and, after some little dif-

ficulty, succeeded in hiring a horse to go to Standwell that night.

Arthur rode the whole night through and a part of the next morning.

It was eleven o'clock when he reached Standwell.

He put his horse up at the "Peaks," took a single cup of coffee, and then set out to look up a magistrate.

He found Squire Browning, an old friend of the Llewellyns and the Powises in his office and at leisure.

Arthur solicited and obtained a private interview, and then he told the story of Mrs. Llewellyn's crimes and Gladys' wrongs.

After some demur, Squire Browning issued a warrant for the arrest of Jane Jay Llewellyn upon the charge of abduction and poisoning; a second warrant for the arrest of James Stukely, for aiding and abetting the said Jane Jay Llewellyn; and a third warrant for the arrest of the negro Judas, upon the charge of highway robbery and attempted murder.

And armed with these warrants, and accompanied by three mounted constables, Arthur Powis set out again for Kader Idris.

All these arrangements had occupied so much of the day that it was quite late in the afternoon when the party rode out of Standwell; and it was quite dark when they reached Kader Idris.

As they drew near the house, Arthur noticed with surprise that the whole front of the mansion was lighted up as for some scene of festivity.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

UTTER DESPAIR.

When Gladys awoke from the swoon produced by the chloroform, the first object that met her opening eyes was the same that ten minutes before they had closed upon in apparent death—the baleful, green, glaring eyes of her mortal enemy! And the first feeling of which she became conscious, if, indeed, it could be called a feeling, was that of utter despair.

"Well, my pretty ward! I have caught you at last! A fine time I have had, taking care of you during your minority! But I have got you safe once more! And you shall not escape me again!" said Mrs. Llewellyn, hissing forth the words between her set teeth.

"I do not care! I do not care!" screamed Gladys. "You will die sooner or later! Perhaps I shall kill you! I won't if I keep my senses; but you may drive me mad; and then, spite of all you can do, I shall kill you! For the mad are very cunning, you know, and they find out means of deceiving and destroying that would never occur to the sane!"

"You will not go mad; your Llewellyn brain is too strong. It may become eccentric from its very strength, but never insane," coolly replied the woman.

"Very well! I don't care! If I do not go mad and kill you, at least you must, of course, die some time or other; or, at all events, it is certain that the world will some day come to an end; and then, Mrs. Jay, then you will go to burning flames! And I shall glory in your torment and your despair! yes, I shall. Oh! I never believed in hell before; but I do now. I never believed that the good Father in Heaven ever created or permitted a place of eternal torture for any of his creatures, but now I do. Now I see how necessary it is for just such devils as you are, Mrs. Jay! Now I believe in it! now I desire it! now I pray for it! Oh! I should not be perfectly happy in highest heaven unless I knew that you were in deepest hell, without one hope of ever, in all eternity, getting out!"

These and more wild and wicked words poor Gladys uttered in the frenzy of her despair. Who was accountable for their exceeding sinfulness? Not Gladys, perhaps, but the wretched woman through whom the "offense" came.

While Gladys was still raving, and the carriage still going at full speed, she caught a glimpse of a horseman riding toward them from the opposite direction. In an instant the hope of escape once more presented itself to her, and she dashed open the window and screamed:

"Help! help! for Heaven's dear sake, help!"

But just as she saw the horseman throw himself from

his horse and reize the head of the leader—just as she hoped for rescue—she herself was caught back by her captor, held fast, and suffocated by a handkerchief saturated with chloroform.

When once more she recovered from the effects of this powerful agent, she found herself whirled rapidly along the forest road, that was now momentarily growing darker under the advancing shadows of night.

She spoke no more, but in the anguish of her soul she reproached heaven and earth.

It was Mrs. Llewellyn who had the "floor," and did all the speaking. And bitterly she taunted her victim with her utter helplessness and hopelessness.

But through all that dark night journey Gladys spoke no more.

As day dawned, they passed out of the forest into the more open country, and by the first beams of the rising sun they saw before them the village of Unionville.

As they entered the village, Mrs. Llewellyn again chloroformed her patient. So that when they drove up to the village tavern, Gladys, in a state of complete insensibility, was lifted from the carriage, and conveyed to a private room, and laid upon a sofa.

Here Mrs. Llewellyn ordered her own breakfast to be brought, and while it was being prepared she sat beside her victim, and upon the slightest sign of return to sensibility, she administered her horrible drug.

When the servant brought in the breakfast and respectfully asked if he could do anything for the sick young lady, she answered him in the negative, and dismissed him from the room.

She took her breakfast alone, and when it was finished, the horses, refreshed by a good feed, were put to the carriage, and Gladys, still in a deep, deathlike swoon, was carried back to her wheeled prison.

When Gladys awoke again, they were whirling along a road that wound through certain old fields, and the snow was falling thickly around them. But she did not notice it. Sunshine or tempest was nothing to her.

She was faint from fatigue, and hunger, and despair, but she did not care. Life or death mattered little to her.

All day long they drove through the snowstorm.

Late in the afternoon they reached the little mountain village of Upperville. As they drove into the principal street, Mrs. Llewellyn again seized and chloroformed her victim, now quite incapable of resistance. They drove up to the best hotel, where Gladys was again lifted from the carriage and conveyed to a private room, where she lay insensible upon the sofa, while Mrs. Llewellyn got her own supper, and fresh horses were put to the carriage.

It was no part of this woman's design that her victim should perish of hunger; so she filled a bottle with coffee and rolled up a parcel of sandwiches, and took them with her into the carriage.

Upon this occasion the swoon of Gladys continued so long as to excite serious apprehensions in the mind of the woman who had so vilely practiced upon her health and reason. But at length, when, in the midst of that terrible fall of snow, they were slowly winding through a defile of the Blue Ridge, Gladys once more opened her eyes—how large and hungry and despairing they looked!

"You are famished," said her tormentor.

"Yes," sighed Gladys.

"Eat, then," said the other, placing the coffee and the sandwiches before her.

"No; I will die," answered Gladys, wearily.

"As you please; but you will not die until you have served my purpose!" hissed the woman.

Then both relapsed into silence. And the carriage drove on through night and storm for an hour or two longer.

Suddenly it stopped.

"What is the matter?" called Mrs. Llewellyn from the window. Then suddenly recollecting that her coachman could not hear, she rapped upon the front panel of the carriage until she produced a vibration that could be felt.

In another moment the deaf and dumb negro was at the window.

"What is the matter?" she spelt rapidly upon her fingers by the light of the carriage lamp.

"If you please, ma'am, the road has become almost impassable. But we are at Snicker's Gap. Had we not better put up at the tavern here for the night?" he spelt.

"Yes," she answered briefly on her fingers.

Again poor Gladys was chloroformed and taken into a private room of the rustic hotel, and this time she was undressed and put to bed.

Mrs. Llewellyn had a comfortable supper; so had the coachman; and so also the horses; but not Gladys; she, poor girl, remained in her artificially produced swoon for the greater portion of the night.

Mrs. Llewellyn sat beside her bed and watched her. She feared that she had gone too far in practicing upon this poor girl's nerves and brains; but she feared still more with a horrible and guilty dread to call necessary assistance, lest it should lead to a discovery of her evil deeds. So she watched the pallid face of her victim with the utmost anxiety.

And when, at length, Gladys drew a faint fluttering breath and opened her eyes, Mrs. Llewellyn hastened to fill a feeding cup with wine, and put the spout of it between the victim's lips and compel her to swallow a little before she should be sufficiently recovered to know what she was doing. Drugged wine it was, for as soon as Gladys had swallowed it she turned over and fell into a deep sleep that was was more natural than the swoon had been.

In the morning, as soon as it was light enough to see the road, Gladys was muffled up and conveyed to the carriage that was in readiness before the door. And Mrs. Llewellyn resumed her journey.

The second day's travel was so much like the first that it need not be described. They stopped only twice, when it was absolutely necessary to change horses and to take refreshments. Gladys was always chloroformed before being taken from the carriage. And to sympathizing inquiries concerning the health of "the poor young lady," Mrs. Llewellyn answered that her young charge had only fainted from fatigue.

Always Mrs. Llewellyn, her coachmen and her horses got comfortable meals. And life was sustained in Gladys only by the administration of a few drops of wine at the point of time when she would be recovering from the effects of chloroform, and just capable of swallowing without being conscious of the act.

They rode through all the next night; passed through

Standwell at the break of day, and reached Kader Idris about ten o'clock on Tuesday morning.

Gladys, no longer unconscious, but too weak to resist or to talk, and almost to breathe, was lifted out of the carriage and conveyed to her own apartments and laid upon her bed, just as she had been more than a year before. Only upon this occasion her deliverer and avenger was close in pursuit.

The darkest hour, you know, is always just before the dawn of day.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A WILLING TOOL.

I wish the good had half the energy possessed by the wicked. If they had, I am sure that the victory of the right over the wrong would more frequently be won.

As soon as Mrs. Llewellyn had seen Gladys safely locked in her room, she went to her own chambers, changed her traveling habit for a home dress, and then, without allowing herself one hour's repose after her harassing journey, she passed at once downstairs to push forward the criminal purpose she had in view.

First she went into the small parlor that was the common family sitting-room.

On opening the door she involuntarily started and shrunk back in surprise and alarm at a piece of her own work that sat staring her in the face!

It was Mr. James Stukely—who was seated bolt upright upon the sofa, with his hands hanging down by his sides, his mouth open, his chin fallen, his eyes gazing into vacancy, his face pale as death, and his expression idiotic.

It was perfectly clear that he had been put through a course of Mrs. Llewellyn's sedatives, and that the treatment had gone unusually hard with him.

Mrs. Llewellyn looked at him for a minute, during which he never noticed her presence or moved a muscle of his face or form.

"How do you do, James?" said his mother at length, approaching him very cautiously.

"Extra——" began Mr. Stukely; but he did not finish the word or change his position.

"James," said his mother, very emphatically, in order to arrest his attention, "James, I have had a very dangerous journey; but I have got home safe at last, and I have brought Gladys with me."

"Ah, in——" began Mr. Stukely; but he thought better of it, and stopped in the middle of the phrase.

"Oh, this fellow Nugent has gone beyond my orders! He has really poisoned my boy! He should have known that his poor brain could not bear much!" said Mrs. Llewellyn, indignantly, as she swept out of the parlor and passed into the library, where, after sharply ringing the bell, she threw herself into an easy-chair.

A servant soon answered the summons.

"Is Mr. Nugent in his room?"

"Yes, madam, he got in from Standwell a few minutes ago."

"Let him know that I have returned home and would like to see him here."

The servant bowed and went to obey the order.

Before introducing this gentleman into the library, I must tell who and what he was; and where and wherefore Mrs. Llewellyn had made his acquaintance, and invited him to her house.

About the time that Gladys fled from New York there was a tremendous parochial and newspaper excitement over the case of a certain unworthy preacher, who for gross impropriety of conduct had been discharged by his congregation, and was awaiting the meeting of the proper authorities to investigate his case, and with every probability of being finally ungowned and dismissed from the pulpit. The public were divided in opinion as to his guilt or innocence; but not equally; by far the greater portion believed him guilty. Mrs. Llewellyn had read all the paragraphs pro and con, and she believed the accused preacher to be guilty of the charges preferred against him. Perhaps being of a kindred spirit, she understood him better than others did. She saw in him the very tool she needed to work out her designs against Gladys.

She wrote him a letter, in which she declared her full belief that he was an innocent and injured man; and she

invited and pressed him to call and see her, that she might express to him personally her sympathy and respect.

Refreshing as rain upon the parched heath fell the words of this letter upon the desolate heart of the preacher, who, whether guilty or not guilty, most deeply felt the blasting ban breathed over him by society at large.

He lost no time in calling on Mrs. Llewellyn, who received him with all the tenderness of a loving mother and all the veneration of a believing disciple. She reiterated in his presence her earnest belief in his innocence, and promised all her social influence in his favor.

But be it noted that the social influence of Mrs. Llewellyn in New York amounted to nothing, since she had sedulously avoided society, and had made no acquaintances whatever in the city. And she invited him to dine with her the next day. Delighted with his reception, he readily accepted the invitation, and the next day duly presented himself at the dinner hour. Nor was that the last time he dined with his lady patroness. Mrs. Llewellyn, not doubting but that she should be able to recapture Gladys in due time, delayed her departure from New York in order to cultivate Mr. Nugent. He dined with her a second and a third time.

And then, still treating him with an affectation of sympathy and respect, she informed him of her intention soon to leave New York.

He expressed the deepest regret at her intended departure.

She then remarked that New York could not, at the present time, be a very agreeable residence for himself.

He assured her that it was not; and that it would be much less so when she, his respected friend and beloved sister, should have departed. And he spoke with an air as though he suspected the middle-aged widow had fallen in love with him and was trying to draw him on to make a proposal, even if she did not intend to go further and make one herself. But Mr. Nugent resolved to proceed cautiously. He was a needy preacher out of employment and in disgrace; but for all that he would not sacrifice himself to a middle-aged widow unless he should be well assured that she was rich. Vanity was not among the least of Mr. Nugent's natural en-

dowments. But no such thoughts were in the mind of the proud lady, far too proud, even if she had been younger, to have taken any man's yoke upon her; and especially this man's, upon whom she looked down with a private scorn and contempt, which could he have felt and known, must have humbled his self-conceit to the dust.

She smothered her feelings of disgust, and speaking to him, as an honorable woman to an honorable man, she invited him to accompany her to Virginia as her escort on her journey and as her guest for the winter.

With a secret smile of gratified vanity and with many outward expressions of thankfulness, he accepted this invitation.

And the next day the whole party set out for Virginia. And in three days, they arrived at Kader Idris.

In a day or two after their arrival, the guest began to employ himself by trying to find out the financial circumstances of his hostess, and especially whether she was really the owner of the vast estate of Kader Idris. If so, he resolved to lose not an hour in proposing to the widow and securing a life interest in the property, when of course he could snap his fingers at the "convention." Some little remnant of delicacy prevented him from making inquiries of her son. But on his first visit to the post office at Standwell, he did not scruple to ask the postmaster. And then and there he received the information that Mrs. Llewellyn resided at Kader Idris, only as the guardian of the heiress; and that in her own right she did not possess a dollar.

Nugent ground his teeth with disappointment and rage—rage at his hostess especially, whom in his heart he accused of trying to entrap him, by a show of wealth, into a marriage with herself. And he resolved to "pay her off," as he expressed it, by continuing to accept her hospitality and patronage and enjoying all the comforts and luxuries of Kader Idris just as long and as fully as he possibly could, and then, when the crisis should come, by going off and breaking her heart.

Ruminating over these worthy projects he rode slowly on until he reached Kader Idris.

But that very day he was destined to be undeceived as

to his false suspicions, and posted up as to the true state of the case.

That day Mrs. Llewellyn had determined that on the next morning she would set out for Washington in search of Gladys, whom she felt certain she should find hiding at Ceres Cottage. But even while she was making preparations for her departure, she received the morning mail, containing, among other parcels, the Washington papers. Glancing over these latter, her eyes happened to fall on the two advertisements that had been put in by poor Gladys.

Her face lighted up with fiendish triumph as she read them; for, of course, she recognized at once, in the advertiser her deeply-wronged fugitive ward. No other but Gladys would have advertised for Lieutenant Arthur Powis. And besides the advertisement was signed by Gladys' own initials. And the next advertisement for the situation as a governess, was written in the same style and signed by the same initials; and therefore, of course, must have been put in by the same person, and that person was Gladys Powis.

Here, then, was a trap unconsciously set by the poor girl herself. All that Mrs. Llewellyn would have to do would be to put on the bait and pull the string, and the game would be secured. In other words, she only need answer the advertisement for the situation of governess, by offering more liberal terms than it was possible any one else should offer; by forbearing to ask for references, as it was certain any one else would do, and by signing the letter with a fictitious name and appointing a place of meeting on the soil of Virginia, where Gladys, unable to prove her marriage in time, would drop legally into her guardian's power.

This plan she knew would save a world of scheming that she would have had to have gone through had Gladys remained with the old ladies at Ceres Cottage, under the protection of the laws of Maryland.

And before the day was out, she imparted enough of her plans to Mr. Nugent as would enable him to become her intelligent confederate.

She did not, however, admit him into her full confidence; for to do so would have been to confess her-

self to be an unprincipled wretch, and by inference to declare her belief that he himself was no better. And refined villains do not go to work in that way. It is only your rude, unsophisticated, comparatively innocent rascals, those that plan the robbing of a bank or the murder of a traveler, who are perfectly honest with each other and call things by their right names, and apply to acts their true motives. Your refined and accomplished villains, on the contrary, keep up a thin show of honor and mutual respect, and pretend to deceive themselves and each other.

Thus Mrs. Llewellyn, knowing in her deepest consciousness that Nugent was an abominable wretch, who had deservedly been turned out of his parish by his congregation, and would soon be ungowned by his clerical brethren in council, still treated him as if she believed him to be an honorable man; yes, treated him so, even when telling him a story and making him a proposal that any intelligent man must immediately see through, and any honest man repudiate in disgust.

She told him that her ward, Miss Llewellyn, had been betrothed by her parents to her son, Mr. Stukely; but that she was, alas! weak-minded almost to fatuity; that she had run off with a fortune-hunter, who had deserted her, and who had afterward met his death by an accident; and that now she wished the marriage ceremony between her ward and her son to be very privately performed, as soon as she could get possession of the person of the unhappy girl, who was now, she said, staying at a cheap, disreputable boarding-house in Washington, from which she was going the next day to bring her. She further declared that her sole object was now the salvation of that wretched girl. But that the very nature of the circumstances rendered it necessary that some clergyman who was a confidential friend of the family should officiate. Finally, she hinted that the fee given to the officiating clergyman on the occasion of the marriage of an heir of the house of Llewellyn was never less than one thousand dollars. And that—though she knew Mr. Nugent was entirely above such mercenary considerations—yet she begged his per-

mission to state that on the marriage of its sole heiress the fee would be doubled.

At this the eyes of the false minister shone with a lurid lustre.

He knew in his heart that the woman who spoke to him was a devil, past the possibility of pardon, yet he answered her as though he considered her an angel of light.

He said that of course he knew she could only have the best welfare of her unhappy ward at heart; that he hoped the young lady, weak-minded as she might be, might still have sense enough to appreciate such devotion on the part of her guardian; that, for himself, he could not sufficiently admire such generosity and disinterestedness as he had the happiness to witness in his fair and honored hostess and friend, who was thus willing to sacrifice the widow's only treasure, her sole son, to reclaim this erring girl. Finally, he assured her that he should feel bound by every tie of honor, admiration, and gratitude, to hold himself at her orders. And he misquoted Milton:

"What thou command'st,
Unargued I obey."

Mrs. Llewellyn warmly thanked him, and they parted.

When Mrs. Llewellyn was alone she smiled to herself as she thought: He understands the whole thing. But I do not care, since he does not dare to show that he understands it; and, more than all, that he does not hesitate to sell me his aid; he does not, in fact, hesitate at anything which he thinks will bring a remunerative return.

When Mr. Nugent found himself alone, he thought: That woman is an unscrupulous wretch, who means to betray her helpless ward into a marriage with her imbecile son, so that she, herself, may enjoy the wealth of Kader Idris, and manage its vast revenues for the term of her natural life! for, of course, these two miserable young people, if the girl is as feeble-minded as the young man, will be but as babies in her hands. They will not ever have a dollar of pocket money that she will not dole out to them. And she wishes to use

me as her tool to accomplish all this. Well, so long as she does not presume to unmask her villainy to me; so long as she treats me as an honest man, and puts all her actions upon honorable grounds; and, above all, so long as she pays me well, I will serve her turn! And afterward, she shall serve my turn! For if there should be anything the least irregular in this marriage—as I am sure there will be, or she would never go to the trouble and expense of bringing me into the affair—I shall know that its legality is very questionable indeed. And I shall thus have a hold upon Mrs. Llewellyn and the revenues of the Kader Idris estate that even she will not dare to deny.

Late that same evening Mrs. Llewellyn had another interview with her confederate. She told him that she wished to leave her house and household in his care during her necessary absence in Washington. And she put a parcel of twelve small powders in his hands, and told him that they were the prescriptions of a celebrated physician of New York for her son, who was in a precarious state of health; but that the young man was so unreasonably opposed to taking wholesome medicine, that she was obliged to drop one of these powders into his first cup of coffee in the morning, and into his first cup of tea in the evening.

Nugent, though convinced that some deep villainy lay concealed under the secret administration of these powders, yet promised to see that the powders were administered.

The next day Mrs. Llewellyn set out, not for Washington, but for Alexandria, which she intended to make her headquarters during her infamous campaign.

From Alexandria she went by stage to Dranesville, to post that lying letter which had decoyed poor Gladys into her power.

And on the appointed day she went in her new carriage and pair to meet her and entrap her as we have seen.

She had now, again, her victim in her possession, and her plans were all once more arranged for action; and she was sitting in the library awaiting the entrance of that willing tool which was to insure her success.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FORTUNATE THIRD TRIAL.

It is certain that if a bad man were always labeled "villain" by physiognomy, his career in crime would speedily be cut short, or, perhaps, it would never even be begun. But, unfortunately, this is not generally so. At some former period in the history of the human race characters and countenances may have been in harmony, but not now. It is likely a man may inherit his features from one ancestor and his disposition from another; and these two may have been as opposite in their natures as light and darkness.

One of the most kindly, happy and charming-looking portraits we ever saw was that of a "gentleman" who had been convicted and executed for poisoning several of his dearest friends and nearest relatives.

And one of the most diabolical-looking physiognomies that ever chilled the blood in the veins of the beholder was that of an antique bust on exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London, and labeled—Tiberius the Good!

After that we ceased to judge of character by countenances.

There was certainly nothing to repel confidence, or to arouse suspicion, in the fair face and blue eyes of the graceful young man who answered Mrs. Llewellyn's summons to the library.

"Sit down, Mr. Nugent," said the lady.

The young man bowed and complied.

"You expected me home to-day?"

"I scarcely knew whether to expect you. I feared that you would be detained by the snowstorm."

"But you see I have not been, and I hope there has been no delay in your part."

"Oh, no, madam; everything that has been left to my charge is quite ready."

"You have the license?"

The young man took the document from his pocket and put it in her hands.

"Quite right. I hope you remembered to invite the tenantry on the estate?"

"Yes, madam."

"I consider it necessary that they should attend; for, though I see that you have taken care to get out a special license for this marriage, I still choose that it shall be solemnized as publicly as it can be done in a private house, lest any carper should in future take exceptions to the ceremony as having been too privately performed."

Mr. Nugent bowed his acquiescence to the prudence of these measures.

"And now about my son, the bridegroom-elect. What have you been doing to him to reduce him to the state in which I find him?" asked the lady, very gravely.

"I have simply given him the powders according to your direction."

"What! have you given him no more than two a day?"

"No more than that, madam; and, if you will recollect how many powders you gave me, and how many days you have been absent, you will see that I could not have given him more."

"True. It was I who miscalculated his strength. And now, Mr. Nugent, I believe that is all I have to say to you at present. In future, I will reward your zeal," said the lady, terminating the interview.

At a very early hour of the evening the tenants and dependants of the Llewellyn estate, dressed in their holiday attire, began to assemble at Kadir Idris. Full of wonder were they at the honor that had been done them, and full of conjecture as to the reason why the marriage had been fixed, by special license, to take place at such an unusual hour. But so that they saw the show in the drawing-room, and partook of the feast that had been prepared for them in the dining-room, they troubled themselves but little about the motives and actions of their betters.

When all was ready below stairs—when every room was brilliantly lighted up, and every window dazzlingly illuminated, when the humble wedding guests were crowded, not sitting, but standing, along the walls of the drawing-room, leaving a way clear for the entrance of the wedding party—then Mrs. Llewellyn went up into the

chamber where Gladys still lay like a beautiful automaton on her bed.

Unassisted, the woman lifted the light, flexible form of the helpless girl and placed her on a chair, and then proceeded to dress her, for the third time, in her wedding clothes. Rather awkwardly and clumsily she did this; but then Mrs. Llewellyn cared very little whether her pale and almost lifeless young victim were well or ill dressed, so that she was safely married.

When she had finished this miserable toilet, to the last acts of putting the crushed wreath on the head and arranging the crumpled veil over the form of Gladys, Mrs. Llewellyn laid her back in her chair, and went to look for her son.

She found Mr. Stukely seated where he had remained ever since dinner—in any easy-chair, before the fire, in his own room.

He had forgotten all about his toilet!

And it was now too late to make any considerable change in it. Something, however, must be done.

"James Stukely," shouted his mother, in his ear, as she shook him roughly, and put his dress coat in his hand, "get up and put on this!"

"Extraordi——" began the young gentleman, as he mechanically arose and obeyed.

"And now put on these."

"Ah, ind——" commenced Mr. Stukely, drawing on the white kid gloves that she gave him.

"And now come with me," she said, taking his arm.

"All ri——" began Mr. Stukely, but he forgot to finish his sentence.

Mrs. Llewellyn led him to the room where Gladys, with her benumbed senses, still sat reclining in her chair.

"Come here, take one of your cousin's arms, and help me to lead her downstairs."

"Just s——" began Mr. Stukely; but he seemed fated never to finish even one of his own short sentences.

And Gladys, with her face entirely concealed by the bridal veil that had been drawn over it, was lifted to her feet by the united efforts of Mrs. Llewellyn and Mr. Stukely, and led and guided between them down the stairs, and through the hall, and into the lighted and

crowded drawing-room, where all the humble wedding guests stood around against the walls in eager expectation, and where the officiating clergyman stood in the center of the room in readiness.

On the entrance of the bridal party a buzz of comment went through the assembly.

"Good gracious! how weak she seems! more dead than alive!" was, in better or worse language, the burden of these comments; until at length Mr. Nugent lifted his hand, in a peremptory manner, as a signal for silence, and the murmuring ceased, while Gladys, supported between Mr. Stukely and Mrs. Llewellyn, was led up and stood before the minister.

In the midst of a breathless silence, that was only occasionally interrupted by the entrance of a late guest, the ceremony was commenced.

First was read the solemn preliminary exhortation, to which Mr. Stukely began to respond:

"Extr——" but, as usual, broke down before he finished the word.

This response, however, seemed to be considered quite regular by the obliging minister, who immediately passed on to the important question, addressed to the bridegroom:

"James, wilt thou take this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance, in the holy estate of matrimony?"

To this Mr. Stukely promptly answered:

"Ah, ind——" and then stopped and stared in dumb dismay at the door, through which some new guests seemed to be entering.

But this fragmentary answer also seemed quite satisfactory to the complaisant clergyman, who was proceeding to put a similar question to the bride, when suddenly the book was sent flying from his paralyzed hand, the bridegroom was hurled spinning into the midst of the astounded crowd, and Gladys was caught fainting to the sheltering bosom of Arthur Powis, who, like an avenging spirit, stood among them!

CHAPTER XXXI.

VENGEANCE.

Mr. Stukely, hurled through the crowd by the strong arm of Arthur Powis, struck the opposite wall, where he stood erect, with rigid form, stiffened limbs, pallid face and starting eyes, gasping and chattering

"Ex—ex—ex—ex—ex—traordinary!"

The spectators cautiously drew near and gathered around the bridal party, and stood gazing at them in amazement.

Arthur Powis firmly supported the drooping form of Gladys, and softly whispered reassuring words into her ears.

The Rev. Mr. Nugent remained passive, with his eyes demurely fixed upon the floor, probably understanding the whole case, and considering whether he had not better save himself by turning State's evidence.

Mrs. Jay Llewellyn, still strong in her evil will, was the first to recover her self-possession and powers of speech. Though really appalled by deadly terror and dismay, she turned upon the intruder a front of haughty defiance, and fiercely demanded:

"What means this violent outrage, sir?"

"What means it, madam?" retorted Arthur Powis, sternly. "It means that the day of dire retribution has overtaken you, in the midst of your crimes! and that neither your sex nor your rank shall save you from the felon's dock or the convict's cell that certainly await you." Then turning to the constable, and pointing to the woman, he added: "Officer, there stands your prisoner. Do your duty."

"Jane Jay Llewellyn," said Constable McRay, advancing and laying his hand upon her shoulder, "you are my prisoner!"

"Prisoner!" indignantly exclaimed the woman, dashing off the profaning hand and recoiling from the offensive presence of the constable; "prisoner! How dare you, fellow!"

"I arrest you upon the charge of adbuction and attempted murder!" persisted McRay, following her up and taking a firm grip of her shoulder.

"Hands off, you villain!" shrieked Mrs. Llewellyn, violently shaking herself free once more.

"Murder!" echoed the crowd, in consternation.

"Madam, I should be sorry to be forced to resort to extreme measures, but the charge is a serious one," said the constable, very gravely, as he put his hand in his great-coat pocket and drew forth a pair of ornaments more remarkable for strength than elegance of workmanship, and of the use of which Mrs. Llewellyn had not the slightest idea.

Some one else had, however. In the twinkling of an eye Mr. Stukely dashed through the crowd and struck the handcuffs from the hold of the constable.

Poor boy! In all his weakness and folly he possessed one redeeming quality—it was his love for his most unworthy parent. And her personal danger had done what no other circumstance in the case had been able to do—it had stimulated his half-palsied faculties to action. And now he came forward, her sole defender; not a very powerful or eloquent one, as you will soon see, but the best that was to be had.

"Oh, I say, look here, you know! none of that now; I won't have it, you know! 'Tain't fair, so many on one woman, you know! She's my mother, and, so help me Bob! I won't have her bullied, you know," he said, elbowing his way between the surprised constable and the prisoner, and rolling up his sleeves, and preparing to show fight.

"Stand out of the way, fellow!" said the constable, collaring him and flinging him on one side.

"He is the other prisoner named in the warrant—arrest him," said Arthur Powis, gravely.

"Oh, he is, is he?" said the other constable, picking up the handcuffs and catching hold of Mr. Stukely. "Well, we'll make short work of him."

And in a trice the fetters were snapped upon the young gentleman's wrists.

Mr. Stukely raised his hands and gazed at the bracelets

with a stupefied expression on his blank face, and then, lifting his eyes to his captor, naively inquired:

"What's that for?"

"For resisting a warrant," replied the officer.

"For resisting a warrant? I didn't resist a warrant!" said Mr. Stukely, gazing in dismay first upon the constable's face and then upon his own handcuffed wrists.

"You resisted the warrant for the arrest of this prisoner," said the constable, placing his hand on the shoulder of Mrs. Llewellyn, who again angrily dashed it off.

"Oh! I did, did I? And so you have taken me instead of her! All right! I'm agreed! I would rather these things be on my wrists than hers a thousand times! For, you see, it wasn't she, anyway, who was going to marry another woman's husband—I mean another man's wife. How could she marry Cousin Gladys? It isn't likely. What would have been the use? It would have been impossible, you know."

"End this scene, for Heaven's sake! Officers, take away your prisoners and clear the room! My dear wife is suffering extremely through all this, and needs rest and attention," said Arthur Powis.

"Oh, I say now! look here! let her go, will you?" exclaimed Mr. Stukely, anxiously, seeing that the constable had again advanced toward Mrs. Llewellyn. "Oh, dear, Arthur, look here now! make them let her go, will you? It was not she, it was I that wanted to marry Cousin Gladys! It was indeed! But I didn't get her, so what's the odds? who's hurt?" he added, appealing pathetically to the prosecutor.

"What's the odds? Who's hurt? You scoundrel! do you dare to ask? Look at my wife! Look at your own and your mother's work! Officers, in the name of Heaven, do your duty, unflinchingly!" thundered Arthur Powis.

"Oh, now see here! look here now! I did not know what I was doing when I was standing up here to be married to Cousin Gladys! I didn't indeed, gentlemen. I must have been walking in my sleep! I am sure I must! I know if I had been wide awake I wouldn't have done it. I know I wouldn't; because if it had been left to me, and I wide awake, I had a great deal rather married

Nelly Blythe, the young lady that makes my shirts at college! But, Lord help me, it seems to me as if ever since mother took me home from college the world has always been turning round and round with me; and I have been always marrying Cousin Gladys in a dream; and somebody's always been interrupting the proceedings, and making a muss; and I have been always getting more kicks than half-pence in it all; and, yes! so help me, Bob! in some shape or another, that fellow has always been turning up! And I hope he has turned up for good this time!"

"I hope I have!" said Arthur Powis, grimly. Then turning to the constable, he sternly inquired, while a dangerous light flashed in his eyes: "Officers, will you or will you not execute the warrants that you bear?"

"We will execute them, sir," said Constable McRay, deprecatingly. "Ours is a most unpleasant duty, especially as it relates to the arrest of a lady; but we must do it."

Then going up to Mrs. Llewellyn, he once more laid his hand upon her shrinking shoulder, while he said:

"Madam, I have already executed my warrant for your arrest. You already are my prisoner, and have been so for the last ten minutes. Now, dear madam, I wish to be as polite and as reasonable as possible, if you will be the same. Just ring and order your carriage, if you please, and you shall ride to town in it, and I will attend you as obsequiously as if I was your hired groom," said Constable McRay, persuasively, though withal a little ironically.

"And if I do not, fellow, what then?" haughtily demanded the lady.

"If you do not, madam—— Well, you know the little old saying about the bird that can sing and won't sing; how it must be made to sing, don't you?"

"What do you mean by that, fellow?"

"Why, if you won't go with us willingly, or at least quietly, we must take you as we can, that's all," said the constable, grimly.

"No, you won't, though! not if I know it!" cried Mr. Stukely, striving desperately to free himself from his handcuffs.

Mrs. Llewellyn looked from her vainly-struggling son to the greatly wondering crowd around her; and suddenly, as if by an inspiration of the devil, she appealed to them. Stretching forth her hands, she said:

"Friends! if I have any friends present, hear me! I appeal to you, not on my own behalf; because I am but a comparative stranger among you, having lived on this estate but a few years! I appeal to you on behalf of its heiress, the daughter of your late landlord, General Llewellyn, and the lady of this manor, upon which you have all lived so long and so prosperously."

She paused, and the rude men around her began to look fierce, and to handle their walking-sticks.

"You are a score of honest men against less than half-a-dozen ruffians who have forced themselves into this house; no doubt, whatever their pretended motives may be, with the real motives of robbery and violence! You must see and know that! And, therefore, I feel sure that you will protect us against them!" continued the lady.

"We will! we will!" exclaimed the men, brandishing their walking-sticks, and closing around Mrs. Llewellyn and her son with the intention of rescuing them.

"Hold!" exclaimed Arthur Powis, in a voice of thunder, at which the rude crowd immediately recoiled.

"Are you men? sane men? honest men? And do you know what you do? Pause and listen while I tell you!" he continued, advancing and confronting them, while he supported Gladys' drooping head upon his left shoulder, and pointed with his right hand.

"That woman has appealed to you on behalf of this young lady, the daughter of your late beloved landlord, and the mistress of this manor! Look at this young creature, all of you, and know that to this state she has been reduced by the poisonous drugs administered to her by that woman. And attend, while these persons, who are not thieves and ruffians, as she has falsely represented them to be, but who are officers of the law, sent to arrest her upon the charge of abduction and attempted murder, read their warrant for her apprehension! Constable McRay, advance, if you please, and read, for the instruction of these men, your warrant for the arrest of Jane Jay Llewellyn and others!"

Arthur fell back to give place to the officer. McRay came forward, and opened his warrant, and began to read it. The men grounded their walking-sticks, scratched their heads, and listened.

The charges were for abduction, poisoning, and instigating assassination.

"Abduction—what's that?" asked one countryman.

"Kidnapping," replied one.

"No, it ain't; it's child-stealing," said another.

"No such thing; it's coaxing niggers to run away," said a third.

"Poisoning—oh, Lord!" exclaimed a fourth—"anything but poisoning!"

"And assassinat—— Why, that's highway robbery and murder!" whispered a fifth.

"Can you not see that all this is a miserable calumny and forgery? Is it likely that I would be guilty of such crimes? or that any magistrate would believe it, and issue a warrant for my arrest upon such charges?" demanded Mrs. Llewellyn, with consummate effrontery.

"No, indeed!" answered several voices.

"And you will not, I am sure, allow that false document to be executed upon me!"

"No!" vociferated the countrymen, flourishing their sticks.

"My men!" said Arthur Powis, sternly confronting them once more, "you know not what you do when you violently resist the execution of a warrant. You are free men now; and your force is five times as great as that of the officers of the law here present, and you can, perhaps, easily overcome them by the power of superior numbers——"

"Aye! that you can! and by the weight of a better cause!" put in Mrs. Llewellyn.

"But mind," continued Arthur, "if you do resist the execution of this warrant, you who are free men to-night will to-morrow find yourselves prisoners within four walls, with the prospect of lying in jail through the whole winter, until the spring term of court opens, and then with the certainty of a further term of imprisonment in the State penitientiary. How would you like that? Do you think it would pay?"

Nobody answered at once; but there seemed to be a divided opinion. Some subsided into non-resistance, and others growled words to the effect that they were not to be frightened by threats, and that they were willing to risk life and liberty in defense of a lady any time.

"No doubt of it," said Arthur Powis, heartily; "but let it be in the defense of the innocent and injured lady, not of the guilty and tyrannical one. Let it be in defense of your rightful liege lady, and not of the usurper who tried to rob her of her property, her liberty, and even of her life."

While Arthur spoke earnestly, and the men listened attentively, a new ally advanced to his aid—the Rev. Mr. Nugent, the late confederate of Mrs. Jay Llewellyn. You know, reader, that we all agreed long ago that we did not believe in the often quoted "honor among thieves." And, therefore, we need not be surprised that the astute Mr. Nugent, since the reading of the warrant, saw immediately the most prudent course for himself to pursue, and determined to pursue it. In other words, he resolved to desert his companion in crime, and to come over to her prosecutor, which he did in the following manner: Taking his place beside Arthur Powis, and stretching out both hands toward the excited crowd as though he were about to pronounce a benediction, or to offer up a prayer, he began to speak to them:

"My Christian brethren, I am a minister of the gospel —and as such I beg you will grant me a hearing and follow my advice. My young friend here, who, I am given to understand, is Lieutenant Arthur Powis—of the navy —the friend of the late General Llewellyn and the husband of his only daughter, is quite right in all that he says and does in these premises. And, my brethren, alas! I must, with great pain, admit that this misguided, guilty, and lost woman is always and altogether wrong in all that she says and does——"

"Oh, wretch!" hissed Mrs. Llewellyn, with a glare of hatred.

"My friends," continued Nugent, solemnly, "I do not regard the vituperative abuse of this unhappy woman. My sole concern is for you, lest you be drawn down into the depths of her destruction. My brethren, there is a

warrant out against this ruined woman, to arrest her upon the gravest charges that could be brought against any human being! charges for no less dark crimes than poisoning and assassination! For you to resist this warrant would be to criminate yourselves, as aides and abettors of her crimes, and as accessories after the fact to all her poisonings and assassinations—and thus to render yourselves liable to pains and penalties of the law which I should dread to think of!"

This address produced a terrible effect upon the unlettered crowd, who had certainly no desire to be in any degree implicated in capital crimes.

McRay, taking advantage of their momentary panic, stepped forward and said:

"And I, James McRay, constable, in the name of the commonwealth, call on all good and true men to aid me in the execution of these warrants and in the putting down of all resistance to them."

There was a momentary falling back and a low-toned conversation among the crowd, but no one offered to interfere either on one side or the other.

Then Mrs. Llewellyn with a proud and scornful smile advanced and said:

"You shall not need to summon a *posse comitatus* to arrest one frail woman, brave men! Give me but time to put on my bonnet and shawl and order my carriage and I will go with you. But for you, base, crawling worm!" she hissed, looking with supreme contempt upon her late coadjutor and tool—"for you, know that I did not take you into my confidence before getting you into my power. I paid the detectives in New York to secretly investigate your history! And I am in possession of facts and proofs, which, forwarded to the convention of your church, will crush you to atoms, will grind you to dust, reptile! And as for you, presumptuous fool! wretch! devil!" she exclaimed, fiercely turning and glaring with intolerable scorn and hatred upon Arthur Powis, "as for you, look to yourself! my revenge is complete! And look to your bride! She carries certain death within her bosom!"

And so saying, Mrs. Llewellyn turned to go to her room.

"Follow her, McRay! Do not lose sight of her for one moment! She is cunning enough to make her escape! And more than that, she is reckless enough to destroy her own life! And I would—I would neither have the ends of justice defeated, nor her own soul finally lost," added Arthur Powis, as the officer, who was quite as vigilant as would be desired, attended Mrs. Llewellyn to her chamber, to keep her in sight.

"Oh, I say, Arthur, look here, now, you know! You won't be hard on her, will you?" Mr. Stukely began to plead.

"I am sorry for you, Stukely; but the matter has passed out of my control into that of the law, and so must take its course," replied Arthur Powis, as he lifted Gladys in his arms, carried her to a sofa, laid her down and knelt beside her, and gazed anxiously and tenderly upon her wan, white face.

She was living, breathing, and looking upon him, but with a strange expression, which was rather that of lethargy than unconsciousness.

"Gladys," he said, gently, "do you know me, darling?"

"Yes; I know you, Arthur; and I shall live," she murmured with a sweet smile as her eyes closed in perfect rest. All this calmness was no doubt the lingering effects of the drugs that had been given her.

While Arthur knelt beside his recovered young wife, he heard the constables passing through the hall, carrying away their prisoners.

"The examination is fixed for ten o'clock to-morrow, sir," said one of the constables who led out Mr. Stukely.

"I will be there," answered Arthur.

Meanwhile, Mr. Nugent had been officially engaged in clearing the house of the wedding guests, with the last of whom he himself departed. So Arthur and Gladys were left alone in perfect peace.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PERFECT PEACE.

All night long Arthur Powis sat by the couch of Gladys to watch his recovered treasure. The malignant words of that most malignant woman—"Look to your wife, for she carries certain death in her bosom"—rang in his ears, so that he dared not take his eyes from the fair, wan, lovely face of Gladys.

All night long, in the hall below, a groom waited up, while in the stables a fast horse stood ready saddled for him to start at a moment's notice, should it become necessary to send in haste for a physician to come to Gladys.

But these precautions proved to be needless.

Gladys, with her hand clasped in that of Arthur's, sweetly dropped asleep. And she slept well through the night. Only once she started from a dream, tightened her clasp upon the hand of Arthur and then feeling sure of his presence, sank to rest again.

It was late in the morning and the winter's sun was shining brightly in the chamber, when she opened her eyes. Their first glances were raised to the face of Arthur, who was still seated in the resting chair beside her bed. And such a smile lighted up her face, as had not been there since she had lost him.

"It is no dream, then! you are here? You are really here!" she whispered.

"I am here—never, while we both live, never to leave you again!" murmured Arthur, bending over her and tenderly caressing her.

But she, as if she then for the first time fully realized the fact of his presence, suddenly threw herself upon his bosom in a passion of sobs and tears that nearly shook her fragile frame to dissolution, gasping:

"Oh, Arthur! this is too—too much! too much joy to bear!"

The most loving words, the most gentle caresses, answered her and soothed her emotion in quietness again.

"It is you, it is really and truly you," she murmured,

looking at him wistfully. "It is indeed you; but, oh, Arthur! how ill you look! how very ill! And you have watched beside me all night! I know you have! Why did you do it, dearest? Why didn't you go to sleep?"

"My own loved Gladys, do you think that sleep could have rested and refreshed me half so much as the constant sight of your face—your dear face that has been so long absent from my view—your dear face that my eyes have so long hungered to behold?"

"But it was so selfish in me to drop asleep, then! I ought to have kept awake with you!"

"You could not help falling asleep, my own darling, any more than you could have helped sinking if you had been dropped into the sea."

"No; I don't know that I could. Oh, Arthur, it seems to me that since I lost you one-half of my days have been passed in dreamless sleep and the other half in sleepless dreams—that is to say, in unconsciousness or in reverie."

"I know it, my love. I know it all. You have been drugged nearly to destruction. Nothing but your youth and strength saved you from insanity or death. But it is all over now, my own dear Gladys! it is over forever!"

"You knew all this! How did you know it? And how did you find out where I was?" inquired Gladys, eagerly.

"Partly from the old ladies at the cottage, and partly by accident," smiled Arthur.

"And not at all through my advertisement?"

"Ah, my poor darling! your innocent advertisement served no other purpose than to give that ruthless woman a clew to your residence, at the same time that it afforded her the means to entrap you."

"I know that," said Gladys, with a sigh.

It was noticeable through all this interview that neither the young husband nor the young wife either felt or expressed the least distrust of each other, although there was in the circumstance much that must have created distrust had their faith in each other been less perfect. Arthur never for a moment doubted the constancy of Gladys, even though he had seen her standing up before a clergyman to be married to another. And Gladys never suspected the fidelity of Arthur, even though he

had been unaccountably absent from her for a whole year.

"You saved me in the crisis of my fate, dear Arthur. It must have been another attempt at a false marriage that you interrupted," said Gladys.

"It was," replied Arthur, gravely.

"I thought so," exclaimed Gladys, with a shudder. "But you will believe me, dear Arthur, when I tell you that I had no idea what was passing around me. I knew nothing but confusion until I found myself clasped to your heart; and then I seemed to awake. Oh! it was horrible! It was like being roused from sleepwalking on the edge of a precipice!" cried Gladys, with a shudder.

"But you were roused by the hand that snatched you from the precipice. Let that thought calm you; but do not let your mind dwell long upon that horrible danger. It is past, my beloved. It is past forever, and you are safe."

"And you never doubted me, Arthur?"

"No, never, my own wife. Have I not known you from your childhood? How could I have doubted you? But you, Gladys! What do you think of my long, unexplained absence?" inquired Arthur, with a smile.

"Ah! I do not know what to think, except that it was caused by the machinations of our common enemy."

"And you never, even in your heart, blamed me?"

"Never, Arthur! I can give you back your own words: 'Have I not known you from childhood? How could I have doubted you?' "

"Some day, dear Gladys, when you are stronger, I have a strange story to tell you; until then you must trust me."

"As always," returned Gladys.

Just then there was a rap at the door.

Arthur went and opened it.

"If you please, sir, the carriage you ordered to be at the door at eight o'clock has been waiting some time," said the voice of a manservant without.

"Quite right; let it wait a few moments longer," replied Arthur Powis, closing the door.

"My dearest love," he said, as he returned to the bedside of his wife, "the examination of Mrs. Llewellyn and

her accomplices is to come off at ten o'clock this morning, before Squire Browning, at Standwell. As I am the prosecutor, I must attend. Now, you are very weak, very unfit to bear either fatigue or anxiety. I know, my own Gladys, exactly how it is with you now. After all that you have suffered in mind and body, you will scarcely be able either to endure the short journey to Standwell, or the short separation from me. But one or the other you must make up your mind to bear. I will leave it to you. Will you ride with me to Standwell, or will you remain here alone until I return this evening?"

"Oh, I will go with you, dear Arthur. Oh, I should not feel safe to keep my senses if I were to be left alone here all day. I should expect to wake up and find all my happiness to have been a dream! Or I should dread to have that woman spring upon me suddenly, with a sponge full of chloroform, and overwhelm my consciousness, and spirit me away. Oh, I know such fancies and such fears are very foolish and weak; but they would come upon me and conquer me, I know. Bear with me a little while, dear Arthur, until I feel stronger and safer. I will not try your patience very long."

"I will bear with you forever, my dear Gladys. It shall be as you wish. I will go down and hurry the preparations for our departure. And you will ring for your maid, dear, and have a cup of coffee brought up to you at once."

"I do not know that I have a maid. I have been here but a day—a day which has passed as a terrible dream—in which I seem to have been attended by a demon in the shape of Mrs. Jay," smiled Gladys.

"I will go down and send some women to you, then. And remember, my gentle Gladys, that you are now sole mistress of this mansion. Your guardian has forfeited all her rights and is in the hands of the law. Why, even I, your husband, have no power here that is not derived from you. The terms of your father's will secure everything to his daughter, as is right."

"Oh, Arthur! Arthur! don't speak so! Do you think that I want any power that does not come directly from you? Oh, dear Arthur, if you think so you do not know

my heart! You do not know any true woman's heart," said Gladys, earnestly.

"I do not think so, my own love; you mistake me, Gladys. I only wished to remind you of your position and your privileges. You have been so long and so bitterly oppressed, my darling, that you seem to have forgotten them."

"I wish it had been the other way!"

"How, dearest?"

"I wish you had been the heir of Kader Idris and I had been some poor girl. I know you would have loved me all the same——"

"Heaven knows I would——"

"And you would have been so glad to have given me everything; and I should have been so happy to have received it from you!"

Arthur laughed and stooped and kissed her, saying:

"You discontented little creature. It does not matter one bit who owns the title deeds of this estate, you or I, so that we have each other."

"Well, if it doesn't matter to you, I am sure it needn't to me," replied Gladys, in the same spirit.

Arthur left the room, and his departure was almost instantly followed by the entrance of one at the sight of whom Gladys sprang up, exclaiming:

"Oh, Ailie!"

"Oh, Miss Gladys!" cried the woman, running to the bed.

And the heiress of Kader Idris clasped her arms about the neck of the poor servant woman, and wept with joy.

"I feared that you were dead, Ailie."

"So did I you, Miss Gladys."

"I am so glad to see you."

"So am I you, Miss Gladys."

"Oh! I am so happy to-day."

"And ain't I den neider! Ain't I a happy 'oman dis day? I's willin' to die—no, I ain't dough. I mean as I has seen de desire ob my eyes, and ought to be willin' to die. Fust dar she is, layin' in jail. Oh, ho! put me dar, did she, on a false witness? Now she got put dar hers'f, on a true witness. Oh, ho! I hopes dey'll keep her dar, and it will do her good."

"Did Mrs. Jay put you in prison, Ailie?" said Gladys, compassionately.

"Didn't she dough, neider, Miss Gladys?"

"How was that?"

"Why, dat day—I mean dat night, you know, as I fotch you de letters from de pos' office, and foun' you lock' up in your room, and couldn't get out!"

"I remember."

"Well, you know, I couldn't get in neider."

"No."

"So, you know, miss, I just slipped the letters underneaf de door?"

"Yes."

"And dey had bad news, dat made you so unhappy as I couldn't bear to go away from de door; so I laid down on de mat at de outside like a dog."

"Poor Ailie!"

"And I was so tired, sleep got the better of me; and so the madam found me lying there the next morning. And dat same day she had me 'rested up before a magister for stealin', which she falsely accused me of doing it."

"Oh! Ailie, my poor woman, how you have suffered for me."

"Haven't I, dough? And ain't I willin' to suffer ag'in, if it could do you any good?"

"And—what next, Ailie?"

"Why, de magister 'mitted me. And dar I laid in de jail mor'n two mont's till de court sot. And den dey hadn't proof 'nough 'g'in me to send to de penitence; so dey let me off."

"My poor woman! What did you do, then, Ailie?"

"Come back to de ole place, ob course, and libbed 'long o' my daddy, in de cabin down by de mill. But de poor old man's heart was a'most broken wid de shame and de scandal, and he hardly eber held up his head since."

"He shall now, Ailie. I will take him as well as yourself into the house service, and every one shall know how much I regard and trust you both."

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of another woman, with a tray of breakfast for Gladys.

nd she immediately arose, and with the help of Ailie, d. ssed herself, and sat down to the meal.

When she had finished breakfast, and put on her shawl and bonnet, Arthur came to take her down to the carriage.

The fast horses had been put to it, and they were quite fresh; the roads were also in a good condition; so that they soon accomplished the distance that lay between Kader Idris and Standwell.

They drove directly to the magistrate's office.

They were late—nearly an hour behind time.

Arthur entered, with Gladys leaning upon his arm, and walked up to the magistrate's bench, which he was sorry to see surrounded by a miscellaneous crowd of officers and prisoners.

"I have to apologize for keeping the case waiting; but the distance is great, and the lady by my side not well," said Arthur, addressing the presiding magistrate, and looking around for the Llewellyn party, who were nowhere visible.

"No apology is necessary, Mr. Powis. You have not kept the case waiting. The case will not come on to-day," said Squire Browning.

"The case will not come on to-day?" repeated Arthur Powis, in astonishment.

"No; the prisoners made their escape from the station house last night."

"Made their escape from the station house last night! How was that? It could only have occurred through the most culpable negligence on the part of the officers who had them in charge!" said Arthur, indignantly.

"I have always said that our constabulary arrangements were very inefficient," replied the magistrate.

"But how did they make their escape, sir?" demanded Arthur.

"It seems that they were the only occupants of the lockup house last night; that the lady occupied alone a small inner apartment, and the gentleman and servant the outer one, the door being closed, but not locked, between them. In the outer room one constable guarded the prisoners. The outer door was locked and barred, and the constable had the keys buttoned up safely in

his breast pocket. But in the middle of the night the woman came forth from the inner cell and made a signal to the negro, who instantly threw himself upon the constable and choked him before the latter could resist or cry out. And the woman came and suffocated him to complete insensibility with chloroform. After which they robbed him of his keys; took the handcuffs off Stukely's wrists, and fastened them upon the constable's; stuffed a pocket handkerchief into his mouth; and then quietly unlocked the door and walked out; locked it again on the outside, leaving the constable there a prisoner; and then went off. This morning the only prisoner found in the lockup house was the constable, who was gagged and handcuffed."

"But it was unpardonable carelessness in the authorities to leave three prisoners in the station house, guarded by but one man!" angrily exclaimed Arthur.

"It would seem so; but I suppose the guard was deemed sufficient, as he was within easy call of other help, which would have been summoned but for the suddenness of the attack and the use of chloroform. However, it must be acknowledged that our country arrangements for the care of prisoners are not just exactly what they ought to be," admitted Mr. Browning.

"The constables are in pursuit of the parties, I hope," said Arthur.

"They are doing what they can. There is as yet no clew to the directions the fugitives have taken."

"There never was anything so utterly lazy, stupid and useless as our whole squad of county law officers!" broke forth Arthur Powis, indignantly. "Well, I must give them something to quicken their wits. I will offer a thousand dollars reward for the apprehension of those fugitives. Will you be so good as to furnish me with paper and ink, Mr. Browning," said Arthur, taking out his pocket-pen, and going up to an unoccupied window sill.

But a gentle hand was laid upon his arm, and a gentle voice murmured in his ear:

"Pause, dear Arthur. Do nothing just now. Let us go home."

"What, Gladys! And meanwhile they will get clear off!" exclaimed Arthur, pausing, pen in hand.

"Never mind, dear; let them. Take me home, now, please."

"But Gladys, time is precious; every minute is worth a year when we are in pursuit of fugitives from justice. I will soon get through, love, and then I will take you home."

"Take me home, now, Arthur. I am very tired," persisted Gladys.

"Well, well, little tyrant, I will obey your commands," said Arthur, shutting up his pen and returning it to his pocket. "You do look very tired, poor darling," he added, as he wrapped her shawl more carefully about her and led her back to the carriage.

"Oh! I'm so glad!" exclaimed Gladys, with a sigh of relief, as she sank back among her cushions.

"Glad! glad, dear! glad of their escape!" exclaimed Arthur, in surprise.

"Oh, yes, indeed! so very glad!"

"Gladys, you astound me, love!"

"Oh, dear Arthur, let them go!" she broke forth, eagerly. "Don't pursue them! don't prosecute them! leave them to Divine Providence!"

"Gladys, you amaze me. After your unspeakable wrongs and sufferings at the hands of that guilty and ruthless woman, how can you say one word in her behalf?"

"Oh, I don't know, Arthur, unless it is because I am so happy myself that I cannot bear to inflict pain on any one. A few days ago I felt as you do now. I told that woman I would never forgive her; that I hoped the Lord would never forgive her; for that I could not be happy even in the highest heaven unless I knew that she was burning in the deepest gulf of hell. Yes, Arthur, I said that, and I thought it. But, then, I was perfectly wild with anguish and despair at that time——"

"Yes, from her criminal treatment of you; and yet now you wish her to go free!"

"Yes, I do, Arthur; I am not wild with despair now! I am happy, and my feelings are all changed. Oh-h-h!"

she murmured, with a prolonged sigh of delight, as she dropped her head upon his breast and looked up smilingly to his face, "I am so happy, so blessed and grateful to have you back again safe with me, that I cannot bear to make anybody else miserable. Let the guilty woman and the foolish boy and that wretched negro go, Arthur!"

"How can I let them go unpunished?" earnestly inquired Arthur.

"They will not go unpunished, dearest! How can they? You know the law of retribution better than I do, and should know that they cannot escape punishment. They have sinned; wherefore they must suffer. But we need have nothing to do with it! Let us enjoy our pleasant earth, Arthur! Why should we look back into hell? Think how happy we are, and what large means we have of making others happy! Let us reward our friends, dear Arthur! It is much pleasanter work than that of punishing our enemies. Ah! I long to get at that work!"

"My dear little angel, for you are a little angel, Gladys, I will do whatever you ask me, even to the relinquishing of this prosecution, though it goes sorely against my will."

She thanked him with caresses.

"Besides," she whispered, "would you have the name of Llewellyn, my family name, resound through the country in the very unpleasant association of a criminal trial?"

"I confess, Gladys, that consideration presented itself to my mind from the very first, but it was conquered by my desire to punish that demon for her treatment of you. Even now, it is the strongest argument you could use. No; I would not like such a stigma to attach, however remotely, to the old name."

"Then we will leave the guilty to the justice of God."

"Since you desire it, my dear, we will do so," said Arthur, sealing his promise with a kiss.

CHAPTER XXXIII

MAGNANIMITY.

They drove rapidly back toward home. As the carriage rolled along the avenue leading up to the house, a pleasant sight greeted them.

All the negroes on the estate, with their wives and children, dressed in their holiday attire, were ranged up and down each side of the way to pay their respects to their new master and young mistress.

Arthur Powis had always been a great favorite among them, and Gladys, of course, had been their idol.

Arthur removed his hat, and, bareheaded, drove through the lines, bowing and smiling in reply to their cordial greetings and hearty good wishes.

As to Gladys, the tears filled her eyes, as she kissed her hand again and again to the faithful, affectionate creatures.

When they reached the house, alighted from the carriage and entered the hall, they found the house servants drawn up on each side of the entrance to greet them with similar demonstrations of respect and attachment.

Several were there who, for their fidelity to Gladys, had been long banished from the house, but who now returned, in joy, to welcome her. Bessy, Gladys' first little maid, was there; and Ailie and Ailie's father, old Richard; and Lemuel foremost among them all.

Arthur shook hands with each as he gently drew his weeping and smiling Gladys through the crowd and up the stairs to her own quiet room.

Ailie followed to assist her mistress at the toilet.

"Ailie," said Gladys, "I heard something about a great feast having been prepared in the large dining-room for our people yesterday. What has become of it?"

"Dear ma'am, it is there yet; no one has touched it."

"Call all the field negroes and their wives and children in, then, and let them have it. Give them as much as they can possibly consume and carry away with them," said Gladys.

"But. my darling, consider the disorder and the noise that will be made by that impulsive, untrained crowd, if they are let into the house. They will make you ill!" expostulated Arthur.

"Oh, no, they won't, dear! I shall not mind it. I am so happy—oh, so heavenly happy, dear Arthur—that I want to do something to please others who are not so happy as I am! Besides, it is the proper thing to do, sir," said Gladys, with a little authoritative nod of her head; "quite the proper thing to do. And, besides that, if they don't eat up all those boiled hams, and legs of mutton, and rounds of beef, and roasted pigs, and turkeys, and geese, and pies and puddings, and dumplings, who is to eat them? Go and do as I tell you, Ailie." And Gladys stopped her young husband's further objections with a kiss.

And Ailie went to do her errand. And when she got downstairs, and gave the order to her father, as the most proper person to execute it, she added:

"I tell you what, daddy, I think our Miss Gladys is gwine to wear the—the—the—you know! I mean the lower part of a gentleman's dress!"

"You mean she's a-gwine to be masser and missus bofe! He-he-he!" laughed the old man, with a little, low, childish giggle; "he-he-he, honey! She's one ob de Llewellyns, she is, and dey allas rules de roost—dey does!"

But both father and daughter were mistaken. Gladys' little playful affectation of authority and self-will was but the sparkling up of her effervescent spirits, so long —so long—kept down.

That evening Arthur and Gladys dined quietly together in the cozy little crimson parlor.

Occasionally the sound of revelry from the negroes in the dining-room reached their ears; but it was not disorderly enough to disturb their quiet.

Later, on the same evening, when their humble friends had gone, and the house was restored to order, the young husband and wife sat together on the coziest sofa, in the warmest corner of the hearth. With their hands clasped together, they had a mutual explanation.

Each told the other his or her history of the past year

of trial. And Gladys wept over the misfortune of Arthur. And Arthur raged over the wrongs of Gladys. And then they comforted each other, and found in their present happiness compensation for all their past misery.

And then they left the past and talked of their future. And all their plans had reference rather to the welfare of others than of themselves. They talked of the faithful discarded servants they would restore to service and promote to higher positions and better wages. And of the generous friends they would repay.

"All those are gladsome duties, dear Arthur; but we have one sad one to perform," said Gladys, seriously.

"And what is that, love?" inquired Arthur, tenderly.

"It is to visit the grave of our poor little baby. No! I'm not going to cry, dear Arthur! I am too happy with you here to do that. Only it does seem such a pity that her poor little life——" And Gladys suddenly burst into a passion of tears, and was caught sobbing to the bosom of Arthur, who soothed her with the tenderest words of love.

Yet her tears flowed rather from pity for the "poor little life" that she supposed had perished in its opening than from attachment to the babe she had seen but for an hour. When she had sobbed herself into calmness she raised her head, smiled in his face, and said:

"There! I will not cry any more, dear Arthur! It is very ungrateful to do so when I am so happy with you! very impious, too, when I know she is a little angel in heaven! No, I will not cry any more. But we will go and visit her little grave. Not to disturb it. I do not think it right to disturb a grave. But to see it, and to have it inclosed; and flowers planted over it."

"Yes, my darling, as soon as this frost is over, and your strength is recruited, we will go," replied Arthur.

And thus closed the first day of their reunited lives.

In a few days the health of the young couple visibly improved. Youth, good constitutions, and, above all, happiness, were found to be great restoratives.

They were not selfish in their joy. They made all their humble friends and dependents happier in their own accession to wealth and power.

Ailie was elevated to the position of housekeeper. Lit-

tle Bessy was restored to her place as lady's maid. Old Richard was made head dining-room servant, and Lemuel waiter under him.

Then Gladys thought of her poor friends at Ceres Cottage.

"Are they very poor, Gladys, dear, do you know?" inquired Arthur.

"I fear they are. I believe they have nothing in the world but that house and garden. And I think they live by the sale of fruit and vegetables and butter and milk during the summer. And in winter I think they eke out their little income by knitting woolen stockings for sale. Oh, by the way, they have a little sum of money in the bank—a very little sum—which they will not touch for fear of coming to want."

"We must find some way to increase their income," said Arthur, thoughtfully.

"We must. And in the meantime, as the Christmas holidays are at hand, we must make them up a Christmas box and send them. That will please them better than anything else. Ah, Arthur, how fortunate! I know what I will do!" exclaimed Gladys, eagerly.

"What, dear?"

"Why, first—you know how old-fashioned they are?"

"Yes."

"And how antiquated their dress?"

"Yes."

"Well, you see, they won't dress in any modern style. You couldn't get them to do it. And oh, their clothes are so worn, poor things! and so darned and patched and stayed! and all so neatly you would never guess it; for they have a good deal of personal vanity, those dear old souls; and if their dress is antiquated, they like to have it neat. And oh! wouldn't they like to have it rich, too, if they could?"

"Well, my dear childish Gladys, I suppose your plan is to renovate the old ladies' wardrobe from the best shops in Standwell," said Arthur, smiling at her eagerness.

"'From the best shops in Standwell,' indeed!" said Gladys, with a pretty toss of her head. "What could I get there but flimsy silks and flaunting muslin delaines? No, indeed! but from the cedar chests and sandalwood

boxes of Kadir Idris. From the wardrobes of the ancient ladies of the houses of Llewellyn! Oh, Arthur!" she exclaimed with glee, "such dresses! such rich and heavy silks and satins, and poplins and brocades! all stout and stiff enough to stand alone! and all made in the antiquated style these old ladies love! and all of no manner of use except to send to them, to lift them up to the very seventh heaven of delight! I will pack them all up and send them by the wagon, so that they will reach the old ladies by Christmas Eve."

And eager as a child for a new play, Gladys called Bessie and Ailie to attend her, and hurried upstairs to make a raid upon the stores of rich clothing that had laid for half a century or more in the bureaus and wardrobes of Kader Idris.

She emptied one of the largest cedar chests of its contents so as to repack it for the old ladies.

And then she opened the long-closed depositories, where the antique finery, carefully folded up with sweet gums and dried herbs, was preserved free from moth and mice, and was found as good as new.

And such gowns and petticoats and pelisses and mantles of the richest satin and velvet and poplin and brocade, and such caps and handkerchiefs and ruffs and ruckers of the finest lace, and such shawls and scarfs and capes and pelerines of the softest merino and cashmere, surely were seldom seen before! All these, and also a great quantity of the best underclothing, Gladys packed into the cedar chest.

She was eager, impulsive, and almost extravagant in her benevolent desire to enrich her old friends.

When she had closed and fastened the chest, and tacked a card bearing the name and address of the old ladies for whom it was intended, Gladys did not stop there. She hurried down into the library, where she found Arthur.

"What are you doing, dear?" she inquired.

"Writing to the Navy Department," he answered.

"Oh! you are not going back into the navy, I hope, Arthur. Oh! I had quite forgotten all about it until you spoke. You are not going back?"

"No, dearest. I will never leave you again, Gladys.

can find employment enough in looking after this long-neglected estate. Did you wish to consult me, dear?"

"Yes! about the old ladies!"

Arthur smiled at her vehemence, as he inquired:

"What about them, dear?"

"Well, then, as there is no other way of sending the box of clothing, we will have to send it by our own wagon; and while we are sending the wagon so long a way, we might as well send it full!"

"Full of what, love?"

"Provisions, to be sure; provisions from our own place; a pig, and a sheep, and some turkeys, and geese, and ducks; and some hams, and tongue, and hung beef; and, in short, everything we can think of."

Arthur looked at her quizzically.

"Oh! I know it sounds excessive, Arthur," she said deprecatingly; "but it really is not so. Only think—we have so much, and they so little!" she added, coaxingly.

"Dearest, dearest Gladys, do as you please with your own, my love! I do not think your generosity excessive at all. I would not have you spare your hand in anything whatever; least of all in liberality to these poor old women, who were so kind to you in your distress," said Arthur, earnestly.

"Well, then, finish your letter, and I will go and see to the packing of those other things," said Gladys, with a smile, as she danced off to do her pleasure with her "own."

That same day the wagon was packed with everything that Gladys could think of for the comfort and delight of her old friends.

That evening Arthur and Gladys wrote a joint letter to the old ladies, and intrusted its delivery to Lemuel, who was appointed to drive the wagon.

And early the next morning a pair of stout draught horses were put to the well-laden wagon; and Lemuel, great-coated and shawled, and mounted upon the driver's seat, and having received his last instructions from his master and mistress, touched his hat, gathered up his lines, and drove off, amid the cheers of his fellow-servants.

The next day Arthur was very busy in the library.

Gladys found him so when she came in with her needle-work, to sit with him. She sat down very quietly near the table where he was writing, and, without speaking a word, began to sew.

But Arthur, as soon as he saw her, closed the account-book that lay open before him, and wheeled his chair around toward her.

"Have I interrupted you, Arthur?" she inquired, looking up, deprecatingly.

"No, my darling—how could you? I was only looking over the accounts of your estate during the time it was managed by Mrs. Jay Llewellyn," he answered.

"Mrs. Jay! Oh! Arthur, I have been thinking about her. Now that she has run away I don't know what in the world she will do. She had not a dollar of her own, you know. I am afraid she will starve——" began Gladys; but she was shortly interrupted by Arthur:

"Afraid she will starve! Gladys, are you not very sorry for Satan? Don't your heart bleed for Lucifer? Wouldn't you like to ameliorate the sufferings of the Devil?"

Gladys lifted up to him her large, gentle, dark eyes, full of wonder, and then seeing his meaning, her mood suddenly changed and, with half-saucy, half-serious defiance, she answered:

"Yes, I am sorry for that sad, despairing spirit; and I believe the Lord is, too. So, there now! Put that into your pipe and smoke it, Mr. Arthur."

"Well, you need suffer no anxiety upon Mrs. Jay Llewellyn's account. She has—to use a common phrase—'feathered her nest' well! She has 'made hay while the sun shone.' In a word, Gladys, I have been looking over the books, and I find that she has robbed you of several thousand dollars! What do you say to that?"

"She was welcome to it, Arthur. We shall not miss it. I am glad she has some money."

"But, Gladys, darling, this is weakness."

"Oh, no, it isn't! It is happiness. Oh! Arthur, dear, it is because my heart is so full of love and joy that it has not one bit of room for resentment," exclaimed the young wife, fervently.

He looked at her in admiring wonder.

Was this womanly weakness, or was it angelic goodness? Arthur could not decide just then. But in either case would he have wished her one whit less loving and less forgiving? Ah, no! As he gazed on her, he thanked Heaven earnestly for having bestowed upon him such a crowning blessing as this sweet young creature's love.

A very happy Christmas they spent together at Kader Idris. And their enjoyment was increased by the consciousness that they had ministered so largely to other people's happiness.

CHAPTER XXXIV

PRESENTS.

On Christmas Eve the three sisters arose early in the morning to make their humble preparations for Christmas.

And after their hasty and frugal breakfast they went to work in earnest. Miss Polly helped—or, rather, hindered—Harriet in the kitchen. And Miss Milly and Miss Jenny brightened up the cottage by giving it a thorough sweeping and cleaning. And then all three gathered cedar, spruce, and holly from the garden, and brought it in and adorned their sitting-room, putting a bunch of evergreen and scarlet berries over every picture on the walls, and into the two old-fashioned vases on the mantelshelf.

The sun that had been overclouded all the morning, now suddenly shone out, and smiled into the windows as if in benediction on the poor old sisters' work.

"We shall have a fine day and a bright Christmas after all," said Miss Polly.

"Yes! and the room do look right down cheerful, don't it now?" inquired Miss Milly.

"Ay, that it ralely do," admitted Miss Jenny.

"If we only had a turkey for to-morrow's dinner, Milly. This is the first Christmas as I ever remember not being able to buy a turkey. But times is so sca'ce! It do seem to me as they are getting sca'cer and sca'cer.

For one thing, so many people is a-raising fruit for the market now as is so much better'n ourn. For ourn—I mean our trees—is gettin' old, like ourselves, and don't bear as full and as good as they used to. And for another thing, them there manifactors will be the ruin of our knitting; for they can make socks for twenty-five cents a pair. And here we have to pay twenty cents for yarn enough to knit one pair of socks, and it takes us two days to knit them; and then, unless we sell 'em as low as the manifactored ones, we can't sell 'em at all," sighed Miss Polly.

"Well, you know, Miss Polly, as for me, I don't think it pays to knit them at all," said Miss Milly.

"But, sisters, we must be a-doing of something, and we might as well be doing of that as anything else," observed Miss Jenny.

"I think," suggested Miss Polly, whose mouth watered for roast turkey—"I rarely do think for this once we might draw five dollars out'n the savings bank and make ourselves comfortable this Christmas!"

"Five dollars! What! break the whole hundred dollars as we's got laid up in the bank against a rainy day, and take out five, all to make ourselves comfortable a Christmas. It would be mortal sin!" exclaimed Miss Milly.

"And 'willful waste makes woeful want,' you know, sisters," said Miss Jenny.

"But I do want a roast turkey for Christmas so bad! And we all want new caps and new gowns and new shoes desperate," whimpered Miss Polly.

"Well, but five dollars ain't a-gwine to buy all them things, so we might as well stop thinking about them," said Miss Milly.

"No, and I'm sure there's a-many worse off than we are; so we ought to be contented," said the youngest sister.

"I am contented. If I am not of a contented mind, I'd like to know who is! Only things do always go so wrong end foremost. They always does. Here we ain't got no roast turkey for Christmas——"

"Some poor folks ain't got so much as roast mutton," suggested Milly.

"Nor even bread," said Jenny.

"Hold your tongue, sisters, when your elder is a-speaking. I wouldn't mind so much about the turkey, though I do want it so bad. Still, I wouldn't mind about it if I could only hear from that poor, dear, young creetur. I do wonder Colonel Pollard hasn't writ, as he said he would!"

"Oh, I dessay he has writ. You know the letter-carrier don't come out this way. And we ain't none of us been to the post office."

"No, to be sure. Sisters, I'll go myself directly after dinner; and then if I should fetch a letter home, what a satisfaction."

"Ah, wouldn't it though! it would be as good as a turkey."

"Or even as a five-dollar note."

"It would be a deal better'n either."

"Hush your gabble, sisters, will you. I hear cart-wheels. Some of them there impident hucksters is a-trying to take a short cut through our field on their way to market again, I suppose. I'll order 'em off if they do," exclaimed Miss Polly, rising in wrath against the supposed trespassers.

"Lor', Polly, it ain't no huckster's cart. It's a great, big heavy wagon from up country somewhere. And the nigger as is driving of it has got about five-and-twenty capes to his overcoat, as far as I can see from here," said Miss Milly, who happened to be looking out of the window.

"Yes, and it ain't a-going through the field; it is a-making right for the house," said Miss Jenny, who had come up behind her, and was looking over her shoulder.

But by this time Miss Polly had gone to the front door to see the intruder. Miss Milly and Miss Jenny soon left the window and joined their sister at the door.

The heavy wagon came lumbering onward.

"It must be some mistake," said Polly.

The heavy wagon came lumbering up and stopped.

The big driver got slowly down from his seat, came up to the old ladies, took off his hat, and respectfully inquired:

"Is this Sarious Cottage!"

"Yes; this is Serious Cottage," answered Miss Polly.

"And if you please, are you the Miss Craneses?"

"Yes, we are the Miss Craneses."

"Then, ma'am, this letter is for you ladies," said the man, drawing from his breast pocket a letter which he handed to the sisters.

"It's from him!"

"It's from her!"

"It's from them!"

Simultaneously cried the three sisters, as they stretched forth their hands to seize the letter, and nearly tore it to pieces between them.

"Let me have it, I'm the oldest!" cried Miss Polly, with her eyes snapping.

"Read it, then," said Miss Milly, as she and Miss Jenny relinquish their hold.

Miss Polly, with trembling fingers, opened the letter, and was about to begin reading aloud when Miss Jenny suddenly interposed:

"Let us go into the parlor to read it. And let this man go into the kitchen to warm himself."

"I thank you, ladies; but I will stand here, if you please, until I have received my orders, which you will please to give me when you have done read the letter."

"Come, then, sisters!" said Miss Polly, hurrying into the parlor, followed by the two others.

She dropped down into one chair, and they drew two others and sat as close as they could get to her, while, with hands and voice trembling with agitation, she held the letter up and read it aloud:

KADER IDRIS, December 20th.

OUR DEAR OLD FRIENDS:—We write you a joint letter a few days ago, in which we told you all that happened from our sudden, joyful meeting to our secure and happy establishment in this our beautiful home——

"There!" interrupted Miss Milly; "I said as they'd writ to us. And so you see they have."

"Oh, go on—go on with the letter, Polly!" breathlessly entreated Miss Jenny.

Miss Polly resumed the reading:

Therefore, it would be needless to repeat the narrative. We write these few lines only to wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year, and many of them!—

"The dear loves! To think of us these Christmas times!" said Miss Milly.

"When they have got so much else to think of, too," added Miss Jenny.

"I wish you would let me finish the letter; there isn't much of it," snapped Miss Polly, who once more resumed the reading:

> We write you these few lines only to wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year, and many of them; and also to beg your acceptance of the presents we send as testimonials of the love, esteem, and gratitude of your affectionate young friends.
>
> ARTHUR AND GLADYS.

"Presents! Oh, the darlings! I do love to get presents. But I don't believe I ever had a half-a-dozen in the whole course of my life!" exclaimed Miss Polly.

"Oh, how good they are to us! I wonder where the presents are, and what they are!" said Miss Milly.

"I'll bet you anything as how they are nice needle-books and threadcases as she has made with her own dear hands," said Miss Jenny.

"And I reckon the man has got them in his pocket—let us go and see!" advised Miss Polly, tucking the letter away in her bosom, and starting for the door, followed by her two sisters.

"Where are the things your mistress has sent to us, my good man?" she asked.

"They are in the wagon, ma'am. Shall I take them out?" asked Lemuel.

"Yes."

"In the wagon! Lor', did you ever! What can it be?" mused Miss Milly.

"Maybe it's a turkey," said Miss Jenny.

It was a turkey; or rather a pair of them; for Lemuel, who had put his head and half his body in at the back of the wagon, presently emerged with a huge turkey in each hand.

"Oh, my good gracious alive, did you ever!" cried Miss Polly, raising both her hands.

"Are they both for us?" doubtfully inquired Miss Jenny.

"Bofe, ma'am!" replied the driver, who laid down the turkeys on the bench at the side of the porch and flew off

again to the wagon, from which he again emerged, bringing a young roasting pig in each hand.

"Did you ever in all your life!" cried Miss Polly.

"Are these for us also?" inquired Miss Milly.

"Everything as is in that wagon is for you ladies, every single thing," replied the man, laying down the pigs behind the turkeys, and running off again to the wagon.

"Harriet! Harriet!" cried Miss Jenny, running into the house; "come here directly and help to take these things in."

Harriet came running to answer the call, and stood wondering at the scene before her.

"Lor, Miss Polly," she said, "is you a-gwine to set up a market-shop?"

"No, you fool! Mrs. Colonel Pollard, which has come into her own, has sent us a Christmas gift," answered Miss Milly.

"What on airth is he a-bringing of now?" inquired Miss Milly.

It was a sheep already quartered, and he was bringing two quarters over each shoulder.

"Oh, dear me! It ralely do overjoy me and frighten me at the same time to see so much wittles. We ain't deserving of it. And it is too much for us. And how shall we ever eat it all?" said Miss Jenny, with dilated eyes.

"Don't be afraid, ma'am. It will keep a long time this freezing weather, and get better every day!" said Lemuel, laying down the mutton and returning to the wagon, from which he once more emerged, bringing four hams, two in each hand.

"They won't spoil, at any rate," he said, laying them down and flying off again.

Meanwhile, Harriet was carrying the things to the kitchen and storeroom as fast as she could.

Lemuel was longer than usual at the wagon. He seemed to be removing a great weight. Presently a large cask about half the size of a barrel made its appearance. He lifted it up and lugged it forward.

"What on airth is that, my good man?" inquired Miss Polly.

"It is salt beef, prime, too, ma'am," he said, setting the

cask up before them, and going back to the wagon, from which he presently returned, lugging a similar cask.

"Salt pork, ma'am!" he explained.

"Now I shall never be astonished at anything again as long as ever I live!" said Miss Polly.

"I never expected to have such a piece of good fortin' befall us this side of the grave!" said Miss Milly.

"Why, we've got enough provisions to last us the whole year!" added Miss Jenny.

Meanwhile, Lemuel brought from the wagon two large, dark masses, one in each hand.

"Hung beef!" he said, dropping them.

Then, in successive trips back and forth, he brought a barrel of flour, a barrel of cornmeal, a bag of hominy, a bag of coffee, a box of tea and a large box of sugar.

The sisters said no more! Their astonishment and rapture had gone past expression, and they simply stood with wide-open eyes and mouths, letting the tide of wealth flow in.

"There!" said the negro, as he placed at their feet the last article—a hind quarter of venison—"that is all the eatables, ma'am!' '

"I should think it might be. Seems to me as it has been raining of wittels!" said Miss Polly.

"And now, ma'am, if you please, I will help your woman to store those heavy articles away."

"Thank'y, kindly, my man! for I don't think as our Harriet could lift them casks and barrels!"

"No, I think not," said Lemuel, laughing, as he shouldered a heavy cask, and followed Harriet, who was carrying a bag of coffee, to the storeroom.

"Harriet! Harriet! be prudent; he's a man! Don't let him come too nigh you!" whispered Miss Polly, hurrying after her maid to insinuate this caution into her ear.

"I ain't afeared of 'um!" gruffly replied Harriet.

It took a good hour to store away all the provisions, and then Harriet invited her mistress to go to the storeroom and contemplate their wealth.

"Oh, deary me, I'm almost afraid it is a dream! I have often and often, when I was hungry, dreamt just sich unlikely dreams as this," said Miss Polly.

"Well, for my part, I am afraid as it is a sin to have so much wittels in the house," said Miss Milly.

"But oh, sisters! now we can do something for the poor!" suggested Miss Jenny.

"Oh, yes! there's that poor widow Pike with her five children! We'll send her a leg o' mutton, and some potatoes and turnips for their Christmas dinner."

"And poor old Daddy Brown, who lives all alone by himself! We'll send him as nice a piece of corn beef, and some potatoes and carrots."

"Yes! and don't forget Miss Molly Robins, poor, desolate thing! I declare, we'll send her half of one of the roasting pigs, and plenty of sage and onions."

"Yes, and there's a lot of other poor folks we can send to."

"To be sure! And we sha'n't lose anything by it."

"It will keep the fresh things from spoiling on our hands."

"Yes, and besides, it will bring a blessing; so that we shall not be afraid of enjoying what is left behind," said Miss Polly as she locked the storeroom door, and the sisters returned to their sitting-room.

Lemuel was waiting for them in the hall.

"Come in, my good man! come in; we want to talk to you!" said Miss Polly.

Lemuel entered and stood hat in hand.

"We are very thankful to you also, my good man, for bringing us the things your master and mistress were so kind as to send. How long do you stay in Washington?"

"Well, ma'am, I am got leave to spend Christmas Day with a friend of mine as is living here. But I departs for Kader Idris on the day after."

"Yes; well, my good man, we haven't got no stables; but if you will find a livery stable to put up your horses in and then come back here to get your dinner and supper, and bed, we should be glad to accommodate you."

"Thank you, ma'am, but if you please I promised to stay 'long of my friend."

"You did! Very well, then. But at least you will

go into the kitchen and take something to eat and drink?"

"Thank you, ma'am; I would rather not! 'Tain't three hours since I had my breakfast, coming through Alexander."

"Very well, then. But at least you will come and see us before you go back, for we have a letter of thanks to send to your master and mistress."

"In course, ma'am, I shall come to pay my respects. But, if you please, ma'am, there is something else to come out of the wagon."

"Something else! Oh, Milly! It is more wittels!" exclaimed Miss Polly, in a state of mind between delight and consternation.

"No, ma'am; I don't think as it's any more wittels this time. I'll see."

And Lemuel went out and soon re-entered the room, bending under the weight of a large cedarwood chest, which he sat down upon the carpet before the wondering women.

"And here's the key of it, ma'am," said the man, producing a key from his pocket and handing it to Miss Polly.

"Lor', Milly! It is just sich a handsome chist as Mrs. Washington used to keep her best things in when I was a young 'oman, and used to go and see her housekeeper," said Miss Polly, as she took the key and knelt down to unlock the chest.

"I do wonder what is in it!" muttered Miss Milly.

"Wait and see!" said Miss Jenny.

Miss Polly lifted the lid.

All three heads eagerly bent over it.

First there was a quantity of tissue paper, which Miss Polly removed.

Then she lifted out one after the other, four stout brown satin dresses; all as good as new, though very old-fashioned.

"Oh! my blessed eyes! did they ever behold anything so rich and beautiful?" exclaimed Miss Polly, gazing with satisfaction and desire upon the dresses.

"Four on 'em! one for each of us, and one to spare," cried Miss Milly, clasping her hands in ecstasy.

"There is one apiece for us? We are each to have one, ain't we? Me and Milly can have one apiece, and you can have the other two, you know, Polly," said Miss Jenny, coaxingly.

"Don't you be afeard, Jenny, my dear, you shall have your share. Else how could I ever look Mrs. Colonel Pollard in the face again!"

"What are these?" said Miss Milly, plunging her hands in and drawing forth a large parcel of something gray.

They proved to be three stout gray brocade dresses, almost perfectly fresh.

"Oh, deary, deary me! it is certainly a dream!" exclaimed Miss Polly, half in rapture and half in terror between the sight of her treasures and the doubt lest they should fade away like the visions of the night.

"Three! just exactly one apiece for us. And what beauties!" said Miss Milly.

"There is to be one apiece for us, isn't there, Polly? Milly and me is to have one as well as you, ain't we?" coaxed Miss Jenny.

"Why of course you is, my dear. Do you think as I would rob you?"

"No, I did not think that. But I was afeared because you was the oldest you would take the most."

"No, my dear," said Miss Polly, whom good fortune had put into a most gracious mood—"no, my dear Jenny, I'd never be so mean; though, as you say, being the oldest, I might have a right to the biggest share. Oh, my goodness gracious me! what beautiful black figured silks," she suddenly broke off and exclaimed, as she drew from the chest two rich dresses of the material she named.

"Two! then there's one for you and one for Milly," said Miss Jenny.

"And oh! here is a beautiful black watered silk—That will do for me, and you and Milly can have the figured ones," said Miss Polly.

Then they drew forth, one after another, crimson poplins, and purple camlets, and brown merinos; and admired and divided them.

And then followed the shawls, mantles, and cloaks, which they also examined, wondered at and divided.

Then came the fine lace, lawn and linen, caps, handkerchiefs, and underclothing, which they also equally divided among themselves.

Among other things came a large parcel marked for "Harriet."

"Oh, call her up," said Miss Polly.

And Miss Milly ran to summon her.

"Look'e there, Harriet! See what Mrs. Colonel Pollard has sent us!" exclaimed Miss Jenny, pointing to the mountain of rich clothing piled up on the floor.

"Well, I ralely do think—well, I never!—I do declare to my goodness!" said Harriet, gazing in intense admiration at the wealth.

"And this here bundle is for you, Harriet," said Miss Polly, handing over the parcel.

"For me? Hush, honey! Tell you what!—ain't I set up, though!" exclaimed the woman, with more delight than clearness.

"Open it, Harriet, and let us see what is in it!" said Miss Milly.

"Harriet, nothing loth, unfastened the bundle, which was found to contain a stout green merino dress, a gay plaid shawl, a soft black silk hood and half-a-hozen each of white aprons, neck handkerchiefs and head handkerchiefs.

"Hush, honey! I never expected to be so rich in all my life," cried Harriet, in delight.

There was something else still, folded up in a white paper at the bottom of the chest. On taking it out, Miss Polly read the inscription:

"To make a suit of clothes for Brother Peter."

"Only think of the darling remembering Brother Peter!" exclaimed Miss Milly, while Miss Jenny seized and opened the parcel, which was found to contain a beautiful piece of clerical black cloth.

And under all, at the very bottom of the chest, was seen a large, white envelope with some writing on it.

Miss Polly lifted this and read the inscription:

"To dear Miss Polly, Milly and Jenny, from their loving child."

"Our child! the darling!" said Miss Polly.

"I wish to the goodness alive, as she was our child," sighed Miss Milly.

"Well, and so she is. I always considered her as sich. Can't we have a child of our affections, I wonder," said Miss Jenny.

While they spoke, the elder sister opened the envelope, and uttered a loud cry.

"Oh, dear, what is the matter?" simultaneously exclaimed the two younger ones.

"Oh! boo! hoo! hoo!" whimpered Miss Polly, beginning to weep.

"Oh, dear, deary me, what is it?"

"Lors-a-mercy, can't you speak?" said both the other sisters together.

"It's—too much!—it's overwalloping!" blubbered Miss Polly.

"What is it?" demanded the two sisters.

"This is. Look! look!" exclaimed Miss Polly, drawing from the envelope three notes, each for one hundred dollars, and laying them out on the table.

"Oh, my goodness! Why, that is three times as much as we have been able to save all our lives," said Miss Milly.

"And there is one note for each of us, ain't there? You'll divide equal, won't you, Polly?" asked Miss Jenny, coaxingly.

"Why, in course, Jenny, my dear."

"And I think as we had better put it in the savings bank."

"And there won't be any fear of our ever coming to want again!"

"And now, Harriet," said Polly, "you must take all these things upstairs."

"Yes," put in Miss Milly, "and we'll go up and try some of the dresses on, and see if they will fit, and how they will look."

"Yes, indeed! and I hope they will fit; I should like for us to wear them brown satins to church to-morrow," sighed Miss Jenny.

Meanwhile Harriet loaded herself with as many dresses

as she could carry, and took them upstairs. In three or four trips she contrived to remove all the finery.

"You must get the man to help you up with the chist," said Miss Polly.

"Dear me! where is the man?" inquired her sister Milly.

"Why, laws-a-massy, me! he went away while we was a-looking at the clothes," said Miss Jenny.

"Now did he, then? How odd! Never mind! You can just draw the cedar chist into one of the corners, and leave it there until he comes again, and then he will help you up with it," said Miss Polly.

The three sisters went upstairs to try on their dresses. They tried them all on, one after the other, but nearly all of them were too long, and required a little taking up in the skirt—all of them, in fact, except the brown satins, which proved to be perfect fits.

"We will wear these to church to-morrow, and won't the people be astonished!" exclaimed Miss Polly.

"Yes, and we will wear the three black velvet mantles with them also, and that will astonish folks more," added Miss Milly.

"Come, sisters! if we are going to send anything to the poor folks around us as a thank-offering to the Lord for his bounty to us, it is about time we did it," suggested Miss Jenny, and the three sisters went downstairs to fill baskets of provisions for those who were still poorer than themselves.

A very merry Christmas had these old ladies. They went to church in the morning, wearing their new finery; and they brought their brother Peter home to dine with them; and they had a sumptuous Chistmas dinner; and, after dinner they satisfied the curiosity of Brother Peter, which had been greatly excited about their rich dresses. They told him all about the arrival of the wagon and of its contents, and then they showed him the piece of cloth that had been sent to him, at the sight of which his eyes brightened wonderfully; for, in truth, the poor priest was not utterly indifferent to his personal appearance, and his present habiliments were considerably the worse for wear.

Late that afternoon they had another surprise.

The wagon drove up once more. and from it alighted—

not only Lemuel, but Ennis. Lemuel was grinning. Ennis was hanging her head.

"Why, Ennis! is this you? What is the meaning of it all?" inquired Miss Polly.

"Well, if you please, ma'am, me and Ennis was engaged a long time ago, and Miss Gladys—I mean Mrs. Powis—she told me where Ennis was, and she give her consent; so we was married this morning," said Lemuel, answering for his bride.

"And—you are going to take her with you to Kader Idris?"

"Yes, ma'am; which Mrs. Powis is going to take her into her service as seamstress, which, seeing as I am waiter in the house, is a great kindness to us."

"And—when are you going?"

"Well, ma'am, we concluded to start this evening, and get as far as Alexandria, and take a fresh start from there airly in the morning. So, if the letter is ready, ma'am, we'll take it."

The letter was all ready. Brother Peter, at the desire of his sisters, had written it, and now it was delivered to Lemuel, who, with Ennis, departed amid the good wishes of the family.

And the three sisters had the merriest Christmas and the happiest New Year they had ever seen in all their lives. The bounty of Gladys not only cheered their own hearts, but inspired them to dispense to their still poorer neighbors much of aid, comfort and happiness.

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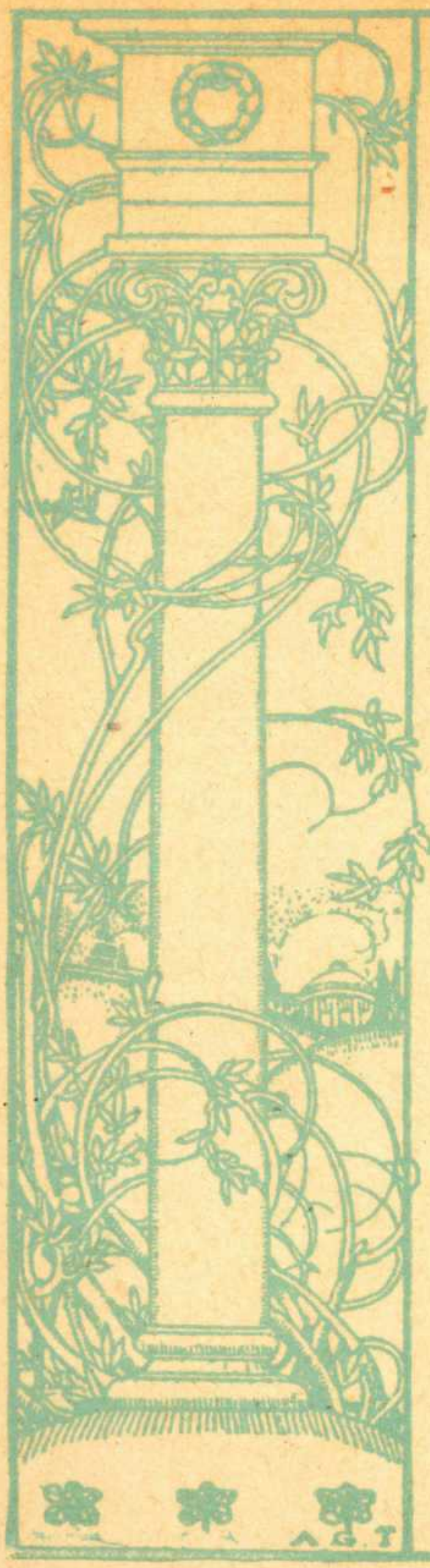

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